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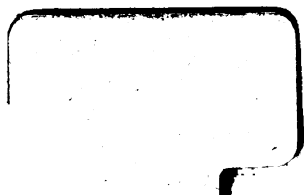


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Historical

*Macaulay
Stanley
Froude
Fiske
Armstrong
Emerson*

KC 3932



OR: GATHERED FROM RICH MINES

Historical Nuggets



MACAULAY STANLEY FROUDE FISKE
ARMSTRONG EMERSON

THE ESSENCE AND ART OF HISTORY



NEW YORK :
FORDS, HOWARD, & HULBERT

KC 3932



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NOTE.

THE object of this gathering of ideas from expert historical and critical writers is to gain a conception of the demands of true "Historical Art." The present time is crowded with histories and biographies, great and small, striving to "summon up remembrance of things past," by rescuing old chronicles and re-creating the great men and women whose thoughts or deeds first gave them being. And it were surely well that we who read, in hope of getting truthful pictures of the earlier, simpler days out of which have grown and branched our own more complex times, should have some guide of principles by which to test the tales these story-tellers offer us.

The essays here collected are drawn from various sources ; yet they bear a logical relation to each other and to the theme of this little book,—namely, *the true aim and method of artistic historical writing.*

MACAULAY is represented by the larger part of one of his most famous critical articles from the *Edinburgh Review*,—first, explaining why “to be a really great historian is perhaps the rarest of intellectual distinctions,” then making a brilliant survey of the most eminent ancient and modern historical writers, and closing with his admirable ideal portrait of the model historian—a fragment often quoted, yet well worth frequent reading, and here preserved in its original connection. Dean STANLEY describes the “sifting process” of history as to facts, and shows the need of the picturesque element in reconstructing men and manners as they were. FROUDE makes plain the demand for discrimination and charity in the verdict on statesmen and rulers, whose work, being based on political theories, will always be debated, while that of artists, poets, musicians, stands free from personal prejudice after their death, and may be judged on its merits, fairly. JOHN FISKE shows how significant were the social conditions under which great men labored, illustrating by the

impossibility of the appearance of inventors and discoverers before kings and warriors had done their chief work in the creation of nations, and before mankind had turned for power rather to industry and commerce than to war. ARMSTRONG describes and analyzes the work of a single writer who seems to him to offer a rare combination of the just, the clear, and the comprehensive, with the imaginative picturesque. And EMERSON concludes the picture of the worth and scope of history with the central fact that "the proper study of mankind is MAN;" that in great men we behold ourselves in the ideal; and that the genuinely great are unerringly selected by time, and will stand above their fellows forever.

In all, it is hoped that this little handbook may be not only a stimulus to the reading of History, but also a helpful guide to the reading with discrimination, as well as affording in itself a delightful series of papers on this very popular realm of literature.

A FEW NUGGETS.

GEORGE SAND :—*To a young friend.*
“ You ask me to make a list of such books as you ought to read. Were I concerned, I would boldly begin the study of history from its very beginning, for the proper study of man is the history of mankind.”

BOVEE :—“ Truth comes to us from the past, as gold is washed down from the mountains of Sierra Nevada, in minute but precious particles, and intermixed with infinite alloy, the debris of centuries.”

THE ACADEMY. London, Eng. :—[Speaking of Cicero's “Familiar Letters,” at the time when Pompey was irresolutely retiring before the rapidly advancing Cæsar]: “How differently from cold history does it all read in these letters, palpitating with the passion of a partisan and a contemporary, lit up by the little personal details which give actual-

ity to the drama! If history were properly written, these letters would be more copiously quoted than they are."

JOHN LORD:—"A great history must have other merits besides accuracy, antiquarian research, and presentation of authorities and notes. It must be a work of art; and art has reference to style and language, to grouping of details and richness of illustration, to eloquence and poetry and beauty. A dry history, however learned, will never be read; it will only be consulted. We require *life* in history, and it is for their *vividness* that Livy and Tacitus will be perpetuated."

LONGFELLOW:—"History casts its shadow far into the world of song."

SHELLEY:—"History is the cyclic poem written by Time upon the memories of men. The past, like an inspired rhapsodist, fills the theater of everlasting generations with her harmony."

AUGUSTINE BIRRELL :—"The dictionaries tell us that history and story are the same word, and are derived from a Greek source, signifying information obtained by inquiry. The natural definition of history, therefore, surely is the story of man upon earth. . . . History is a pageant and not a philosophy."

EMERSON :—"Civil and natural history, the history of art and of literature, must be explained from individual history, or must remain words. . . . The roots of all things are in man."

CARLYLE :—"History is the essence of innumerable biographies."

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I

HISTORY AND HIS-
TORIANS

THOMAS BABINGTON MACAULAY

I.

HISTORY AND HISTORIANS.¹

BY THOMAS BABINGTON MACAULAY.

To write history respectably—that is, to abbreviate despatches, and make extracts from speeches, to intersperse in due proportion epithets of praise and abhorrence, to draw up antithetical characters of great men, setting forth how many contradictory virtues and vices they united, and abounding in *withs* and *withouts*—all this is very easy. But to be a really great historian is perhaps the rarest of intellectual distinctions. Many scientific works are, in their kind, absolutely perfect. There are poems which we should be inclined to designate as faultless, or as

¹ A review of *The Romance of History. England.* By HENRY NEELB. London, 1828. (From the *Edinburgh Review*, May 1828.)

disfigured only by blemishes which pass unnoticed in the general blaze of excellence. There are speeches, some speeches of Demosthenes particularly, in which it would be impossible to alter a word without altering it for the worse. But we are acquainted with no history which approaches to our notion of what a history ought to be—with no history which does not widely depart, either on the right hand or on the left, from the exact line.

The cause may easily be assigned. This province of literature is a debatable land. It lies on the confines of two distinct territories. It is under the jurisdiction of two hostile powers; and, like other districts similarly situated, it is ill defined, ill cultivated, and ill regulated. Instead of being equally shared between its two rulers, the Reason and the Imagination, it falls alternately under the sole and absolute dominion of each. It is sometimes fiction. It is sometimes theory.

History, it has been said, is philosophy teaching by examples. Unhappily, what

the philosophy gains in soundness and depth the examples generally lose in vividness. A perfect historian must possess an imagination sufficiently powerful to make his narrative affecting and picturesque. Yet he must control it so absolutely as to content himself with the materials which he finds, and to refrain from supplying deficiencies by additions of his own. He must be a profound and ingenious reasoner. Yet he must possess sufficient self-command to abstain from casting his facts in the mould of his hypothesis. Those who can justly estimate these almost insuperable difficulties will not think it strange that every writer should have failed, either in the narrative or in the speculative department of history.

It may be laid down as a general rule, though subject to considerable qualifications and exceptions, that history begins in novel and ends in essay. Of the romantic historians Herodotus is the earliest and the best. His animation, his simple-hearted tenderness, his wonderful talent for description and dialogue, and the pure, sweet flow of his

language, place him at the head of narrators. He reminds us of a delightful child. There is a grace beyond the reach of affectation in his awkwardness, a malice in his innocence, an intelligence in his nonsense, an insinuating eloquence in his lisp. We know of no writer who makes such interest for himself and his book in the heart of the reader. At the distance of three-and-twenty centuries, we feel for him the same sort of pitying fondness which Fontaine and Gay are said to have inspired in society. He has written an incomparable book. He has written something better perhaps than the best history ; but he has not written a good history ; he is, from the first to the last chapter, an inventor. We do not here refer merely to those gross fictions with which he has been reproached by the critics of later times. We speak of that coloring which is equally diffused over his whole narrative, and which perpetually leaves the most sagacious reader in doubt what to reject and what to receive. The most authentic parts of his work bear the same relation to his wildest legends

which Henry the Fifth bears to the Tempest. There was an expedition undertaken by Xerxes against Greece; and there was an invasion of France. There was a battle at Plataea; and there was a battle at Agincourt. Cambridge and Exeter, the Constable and the Dauphin, were persons as real as Demaratus and Pausanias. The harangue of the Archbishop on the Salic Law and the Book of Numbers differs much less from the orations which have in all ages proceeded from the right reverend bench than the speeches of Mardonius and Artabanus from those which were delivered at the council-board of Susa. Shakspeare gives us enumerations of armies, and returns of killed and wounded, which are not, we suspect, much less accurate than those of Herodotus. There are passages in Herodotus nearly as long as acts of Shakspeare, in which everything is told dramatically, and in which the narrative serves only the purpose of stage directions. It is possible, no doubt, that the substance of some real conversations may have been reported to the historian. But events,

which, if they ever happened, happened in ages and nations so remote that the particulars could never have been known to him, are related with the greatest minuteness of detail. We have all that Candaules said to Gyges, and all that passed between Astyages and Harpagus. We are, therefore, unable to judge whether, in the account which he gives of transactions respecting which he might possibly have been well informed, we can trust to anything beyond the naked outline; whether, for example, the answer of Gelon to the ambassadors of the Grecian confederacy, or the expressions which passed between Aristides and Themistocles at their famous interview, have been correctly transmitted to us. The great events, are, no doubt, faithfully related. So, probably, are many of the slighter circumstances; but which of them it is impossible to ascertain. The fictions are so much like the facts, and the facts so much like the fictions, that, with respect to many most interesting particulars, our belief is neither given nor withheld, but remains in an uneasy and interminable state

of abeyance. We know that there is truth ; but we cannot exactly decide where it lies.

The faults of Herodotus are the faults of a simple and imaginative mind. Children and servants are remarkably Herodotean in their style of narration. They tell everything dramatically. Their *says hes* and *says shes* are proverbial. . . .

Herodotus wrote as it was natural that he should write. He wrote for a nation susceptible, curious, lively, insatiably desirous of novelty and excitement ; for a nation in which the fine arts had attained their highest excellence, but in which philosophy was still in its infancy. His countrymen had but recently begun to cultivate prose composition. Public transactions had generally been recorded in verse. The first historians might, therefore, indulge without fear of censure in the license allowed to their predecessors the bards. Books were few. The events of former times were learned from tradition and from popular ballads ; the manners of foreign countries from the reports of travelers. It is well known that

the mystery which overhangs what is distant, either in space or time, frequently prevents us from censuring as unnatural what we perceive to be impossible. We stare at a dragoon who has killed three French cuirassiers, as a prodigy ; yet we read, without the least disgust, how Godfrey slew his thousands, and Rinaldo his ten thousands. Within the last hundred years, stories about China and Bantam, which ought not to have imposed on an old nurse, were gravely laid down as foundations of political theories by eminent philosophers. What the time of the Crusades is to us, the generation of Crœsus and Solon was to the Greeks of the time of Herodotus. Babylon was to them what Pekin was to the French academicians of the last century.

For such a people was the book of Herodotus composed ; and, if we may trust to a report, not sanctioned indeed by writers of high authority, but in itself not improbable, it was composed, not to be read, but to be heard. It was not to the slow circulation of a few copies, which the rich only could

possess, that the aspiring author looked for his reward. The great Olympian festival,—the solemnity which collected multitudes, proud of the Grecian name, from the wildest mountains of Doris, and the remotest colonies of Italy and Libya,—was to witness his triumph. The interest of the narrative, and the beauty of the style, were aided by the imposing effect of recitation,—by the splendor of the spectacle,—by the powerful influence of sympathy. A critic who could have asked for authorities in the midst of such a scene must have been of a cold and sceptical nature; and few such critics were there. As was the historian, such were the auditors,—inquisitive, credulous, easily moved by religious awe or patriotic enthusiasm. They were the very men to hear with delight of strange beasts, and birds, and trees,—of dwarfs, and giants, and cannibals,—of gods, whose very names it was impiety to utter,—of ancient dynasties, which had left behind them monuments surpassing all the works of later times,—of towns like provinces,—of rivers like seas,—of

stupendous walls, and temples, and pyramids,—of the rites which the Magi performed at daybreak on the tops of the mountains,—of the secrets inscribed on the eternal obelisks of Memphis. With equal delight they would have listened to the graceful romances of their own country. They now heard of the exact accomplishment of obscure predictions, of the punishment of crimes over which the justice of heaven had seemed to slumber,—of dreams, omens, warnings from the dead,—of princesses, for whom noble suitors contended in every generous exercise of strength and skill,—of infants, strangely preserved from the dagger of the assassin, to fulfil high destinies.

As the narrative approached their own times, the interest became still more absorbing. The chronicler had now to tell the story of that great conflict from which Europe dates its intellectual and political supremacy,—a story which, even at this distance of time, is the most marvelous and the most touching in the annals of the

human race,—a story abounding with all that is wild and wonderful, with all that is pathetic and animating ; with the gigantic caprices of infinite wealth and despotic power—with the mightier miracles of wisdom, of virtue, and of courage. He told them of rivers dried up in a day,—of provinces famished for a meal,—of a passage for ships hewn through the mountains,—of a road for armies spread upon the waves,—of monarchies and commonwealths swept away,—of anxiety, of terror, of confusion, of despair!—and then of proud and stubborn hearts tried in that extremity of evil, and not found wanting,—of resistance long maintained against desperate odds,—of lives dearly sold, when resistance could be maintained no more,—of signal deliverance, and of unsparing revenge. Whatever gave a stronger air of reality to a narrative so well calculated to inflame the passions, and to flatter national pride, was certain to be favorably received. . . .

The fashionable logic of the Greeks, was, indeed, far from strict. Logic never can be

strict where books are scarce, and where information is conveyed orally. We are all aware how frequently fallacies, which, when set down on paper, are at once detected, pass for unanswerable arguments when dexterously and volubly urged in Parliament, at the bar, or in private conversation. The reason is evident. We cannot inspect them closely enough to perceive their inaccuracy. We cannot readily compare them with each other. We lose sight of one part of the subject before another, which ought to be received in connection with it, comes before us; and, as there is no immutable record of what has been admitted and of what has been denied, direct contradictions pass muster with little difficulty. Almost all the education of a Greek consisted in talking and listening. His opinions on government were picked up in the debates of the assembly. If he wished to study metaphysics, instead of shutting himself up with a book, he walked down to the market-place to look for a sophist. So completely were men formed to these habits, that even

writing acquired a conversational air. The philosophers adopted the form of dialogue, as the most natural mode of communicating knowledge. Their reasonings have the merits and the defects which belong to that species of composition, and are characterized rather by quickness and subtilty than by depth and precision. Truth is exhibited in parts, and by glimpses. Innumerable clever hints are given ; but no sound and durable system is erected. The *argumentum ad hominem*, a kind of argument most efficacious in debate, but utterly useless for the investigation of general principles, is among their favorite resources. Hence, though nothing can be more admirable than the skill which Socrates displays in the conversations which Plato has reported or invented, his victories, for the most part, seem to us unprofitable. A trophy is set up ; but no new province is added to the dominions of the human mind.

Still, where thousands of keen and ready intellects were constantly employed in speculating on the qualities of actions and on the

principles of government, it was impossible that history should retain its old character. It became less gossiping and less picturesque ; but much more accurate, and somewhat more scientific.

The history of Thucydides differs from that of Herodotus as a portrait differs from the representation of an imaginary scene ; as the Burke or Fox of Reynolds differs from his Ugolino or his Beaufort. In the former case, the archetype is given : in the latter, it is created. The faculties which are required for the latter purpose are of a higher and rarer order than those which suffice for the former, and indeed necessarily comprise them. He who is able to paint what he sees with the eye of the mind will surely be able to paint what he sees with the eye of the body. He who can invent a story, and tell it well, will also be able to tell, in an interesting manner, a story which he has not invented. If, in practice, some of the best writers of fiction have been among the worst writers of history, it has been because one of their talents had

merged in another so completely that it could not be severed; because, having long been habituated to invent and narrate at the same time, they found it impossible to narrate without inventing.

Some capricious and discontented artists have affected to consider portrait-painting as unworthy of a man of genius. Some critics have spoken in the same contemptuous manner of history. Johnson puts the case thus: The historian tells either what is false or what is true: in the former case he is no historian: in the latter he has no opportunity for displaying his abilities: for truth is one: and all who tell the truth must tell it alike.

It is not difficult to elude both the horns of this dilemma. We will recur to the analogous art of portrait-painting. Any man with eyes and hands may be taught to take a likeness. The process, up to a certain point, is merely mechanical. If this were all, a man of talents might justly despise the occupation. But we could mention portraits which are resemblances,—but

not mere resemblances ; faithful,—but much more than faithful ; portraits which condense into one point of time, and exhibit, at a single glance, the whole history of turbid and eventful lives—in which the eye seems to scrutinize us, and the mouth to command us—in which the brow menaces, and the lip almost quivers with scorn—in which every wrinkle is a comment on some important transaction. The account which Thucydides has given of the retreat from Syracuse is, among narratives, what Vandyk's Lord Strafford is among paintings.

Diversity, it is said, implies error : truth is one, and admits of no degrees. We answer, that this principle holds good only in abstract reasonings. When we talk of the truth of imitation in the fine arts, we mean an imperfect and a graduated truth. No picture is exactly like the original ; nor is a picture good in proportion as it is like the original. When Sir Thomas Lawrence paints a handsome peeress, he does not contemplate her through a powerful microscope, and transfer to the canvas the pores

of the skin, the blood-vessels of the eye, and all the other beauties which Gulliver discovered in the Brobdnaggian maids of honor. If he were to do this, the effect would not merely be unpleasant, but, unless the scale of the picture were proportionably enlarged, would be absolutely *false*. And, after all, a microscope of greater power than that which he had employed would convict him of innumerable omissions. The same may be said of history. Perfectly and absolutely true it cannot be : for, to be perfectly and absolutely true, it ought to record *all* the slightest particulars of the slightest transactions—all the things done and all the words uttered during the time of which it treats. The omission of any circumstance, however insignificant, would be a defect. If history were written thus, the Bodleian library would not contain the occurrences of a week. What is told in the fullest and most accurate annals bears an infinitely small proportion to what is suppressed. The difference between the copious work of Clarendon and the account of the civil wars in the abridg-

ment of Goldsmith vanishes when compared with the immense mass of facts respecting which both are equally silent.

No picture, then, and no history, can present us with the whole truth : but those are the best pictures and the best histories which exhibit such parts of the truth as most nearly produce the effect of the whole. He who is deficient in the art of selection may, by showing nothing but the truth, produce all the effect of the grossest falsehood. It perpetually happens that one writer tells less truth than another, merely because he tells more truths. In the imitative arts we constantly see this. There are lines in the human face, and objects in landscape, which stand in such relations to each other, that they ought either to be all introduced into a painting together or all omitted together. A sketch into which none of them enters may be excellent ; but, if some are given and others left out, though there are more points of likeness, there is less likeness. An outline scrawled with a pen, which seizes the marked features of a countenance, will give

a much stronger idea of it than a bad painting in oils. Yet the worst painting in oils that ever hung at Somerset House resembles the original in many more particulars. A bust of white marble may give an excellent idea of a blooming face. Color the lips and cheeks of the bust, leaving the hair and eyes unaltered, and the similarity, instead of being more striking, will be less so.

History has its foreground and its background : and it is principally in the management of its perspective that one artist differs from another. Some events must be represented on a large scale, others diminished ; the great majority will be lost in the dimness of the horizon ; and a general idea of their joint effect will be given by a few slight touches.

In this respect no writer has ever equalled Thucydides. He was a perfect master of the art of gradual diminution. His history is sometimes as concise as a chronological chart ; yet it is always perspicuous. It is sometimes as minute as one of Lovelace's letters ; yet it is never prolix. He never fails to contract and to expand it in the right place.

Thucydides borrowed from Herodotus the practice of putting speeches of his own into the mouths of his characters. In Herodotus this usage is scarcely censurable. It is of a piece with his whole manner. But it is altogether incongruous in the work of his successor, and violates, not only the accuracy of history, but the decencies of fiction. . . .

Thucydides honestly tells us that some of these discourses are purely fictitious. He may have reported the substance of others correctly. But it is clear from the internal evidence that he has preserved no more than the substance. His own peculiar habits of thought and expression are everywhere discernible. . . .

In spite of this great fault, it must be allowed that Thucydides has surpassed all his rivals in the art of historical narration, in the art of producing an effect on the imagination, by skillful selection and disposition, without indulging in the license of invention. But narration, though an important part of the business of a historian, is not the whole. To append a moral to a

work of fiction is either useless or superfluous. A fiction may give a more impressive effect to what is already known ; but it can teach nothing new. If it presents to us characters and trains of events to which our experience furnishes us with nothing similar, instead of deriving instruction from it, we pronounce it unnatural. We do not form our opinions from it ; but we try it by our preconceived opinions. Fiction, therefore, is essentially imitative. Its merit consists in its resemblance to a model with which we are already familiar, or to which at least we can instantly refer. Hence it is that the anecdotes which interest us most strongly in authentic narrative are offensive when introduced into novels ; that what is called the romantic part of history is in fact the least romantic. It is delightful as history, because it contradicts our previous notions of human nature, and of the connection of causes and effects. It is, on that very account, shocking and incongruous in fiction. In fiction, the principles are given, to find the facts : in history, the facts are given, to find the principles ; and the writer who does

not explain the phenomena as well as state them performs only one half of his office. Facts are the mere dross of history. It is from the abstract truth which interpenetrates them, and lies latent among them like gold in the ore, that the mass derives its whole value : and the precious particles are generally combined with the baser in such a manner that the separation is a task of the utmost difficulty. Here Thucydides is deficient. . . .

Thucydides was undoubtedly a sagacious and reflecting man. This clearly appears from the ability with which he discusses practical questions. But the talent of deciding on the circumstances of a particular case is often possessed in the highest perfection by persons destitute of the power of generalization. Men skilled in the military tactics of civilized nations have been amazed at the far-sightedness and penetration which a Mohawk displays in concerting his stratagems, or in discerning those of his enemies. In England, no class possesses so much of that peculiar ability which is required for

constructing ingenious schemes, and for obviating remote difficulties, as the thieves and the thief-takers. Women have more of this dexterity than men. Lawyers have more of it than statesmen : statesmen have more of it than philosophers. Monk had more of it than Harrington and all his club. Walpole had more of it than Adam Smith or Beccaria. Indeed, the species of discipline by which this dexterity is acquired tends to contract the mind, and to render it incapable of abstract reasoning.

The Grecian statesmen of the age of Thucydides were distinguished by their practical sagacity, their insight into motives, their skill in devising means for the attainment of their ends. A state of society in which the rich were constantly planning the oppression of the poor, and the poor the spoliation of the rich, in which the ties of party had superseded those of country, in which revolutions and counter revolutions were events of daily occurrence, was naturally prolific in desperate and crafty political adventurers. This was the very school in

which men were likely to acquire the dissimulation of Mazarin, the judicious temerity of Richelieu, the penetration, the exquisite tact, the almost instinctive presentiment of approaching events which gave so much authority to the counsel of Shaftesbury that "it was as if a man had inquired of the oracle of God." In this school Thucydides studied; and his wisdom is that which such a school would naturally afford. He judges better of circumstances than of principles. The more a question is narrowed, the better he reasons upon it. His work suggests many most important considerations respecting the first principles of government and morals, the growth of factions, the organization of armies, and the mutual relations of communities. Yet all his general observations on these subjects are very superficial. His most judicious remarks differ from the remarks of a really philosophical historian, as a sum correctly cast up by a book-keeper from a general expression discovered by an algebraist. The former is useful only in a single transaction; the latter may be applied to an infinite number of cases. . . .

Xenophon is commonly placed, but we think without much reason, in the same rank with Herodotus and Thucydides. He resembles them, indeed, in the purity and sweetness of his style ; but, in spirit, he rather resembles that later school of historians, whose works seem to be fables composed for a moral, and who, in their eagerness to give us warnings and examples, forget to give us men and women. The *Life of Cyrus*, whether we look upon it as a history or as a romance, seems to us a very wretched performance. The expedition of the Ten Thousand, and the *History of Grecian Affairs*, are certainly pleasant reading ; but they indicate no great power of mind. In truth, Xenophon, though his taste was elegant, his disposition amiable, and his intercourse with the world extensive, had, we suspect, rather a weak head. Such was evidently the opinion of that extraordinary man to whom he early attached himself, and for whose memory he entertained an idolatrous veneration. He came in only for the milk with which Socrates nourished his

babes in philosophy. A few saws of morality, and a few of the simplest doctrines of natural religion, were enough for the good young man. The strong meat, the bold speculations on physical and metaphysical science, were reserved for auditors of a different description. Even the lawless habits of a captain of mercenary troops could not change the tendency which the character of Xenophon early acquired. To the last, he seems to have retained a sort of heathen Puritanism. The sentiments of piety and virtue which abound in his works are those of a well-meaning man, somewhat timid and narrow-minded, devout from constitution rather than from rational conviction. He was as superstitious as Herodotus, but in a way far more offensive. The very peculiarities which charm us in an infant, the toothless mumbling, the stammering, the tottering, the helplessness, the causeless tears and laughter, are disgusting in old age. In the same manner, the absurdity which precedes a period of general intelligence is often pleasing; that which follows it is con-

temptible. The nonsense of Herodotus is that of a baby. The nonsense of Xenophon is that of a dotard. His stories about dreams, omens, and prophecies, present a strange contrast to the passages in which the shrewd and incredulous Thucydides mentions the popular superstitions. . . .

Polybius and Arrian have given us authentic accounts of facts ; and here their merit ends. They were not men of comprehensive minds ; they had not the art of telling a story in an interesting manner. They have in consequence been thrown into the shade by writers who, though less studious of truth than themselves, understood far better the art of producing effect,—by Livy and Quintus Curtius. . . .

Livy on the whole must be considered as forming a class by himself : no historian with whom we are acquainted has shown so complete an indifference to truth. He seems to have cared only about the picturesque effect of his book, and the honor of his country. On the other hand, we do not know, in the whole range of literature, an

instance of a bad thing so well done. The painting of the narrative is beyond description vivid and graceful. The abundance of interesting sentiments and splendid imagery in the speeches is almost miraculous. His mind is a soil which is never overteemed, a fountain which never seems to trickle. It pours forth profusely; yet it gives no sign of exhaustion. It was probably to this exuberance of thought and language, always fresh, always sweet, always pure, no sooner yielded than repaired, that the critics applied that expression which has been so much discussed, *lactea ubertas*.

All the merits and all the defects of Livy take a coloring from the character of his nation. He was a writer peculiarly Roman; the proud citizen of a commonwealth which had indeed lost the reality of liberty, but which still sacredly preserved its forms—in fact the subject of an arbitrary prince, but in his own estimation one of the masters of the world, with a hundred kings below him, and only the gods above him. He, therefore, looked back on former times with feelings far

different from those which were naturally entertained by his Greek contemporaries, and which at a later period became general among men of letters throughout the Roman Empire. He contemplated the past with interest and delight, not because it furnished a contrast to the present, but because it had led to the present. He recurred to it, not to lose in proud recollections the sense of national degradation, but to trace the progress of national glory. It is true that his veneration for antiquity produced on him some of the effects which it produced on those who arrived at it by a very different road. He has something of their exaggeration, something of their cant, something of their fondness for anomalies and *lusus naturæ* in morality. Yet even here we perceive a difference. They talk rapturously of patriotism and liberty in the abstract. He does not seem to think any country but Rome deserving of love: nor is it for liberty as liberty, but for liberty as a part of the Roman institutions, that he is zealous.

Of the concise and elegant accounts of the

campaigns of Cæsar little can be said. They are incomparable models for military despatches. But histories they are not, and do not pretend to be.

The ancient critics placed Sallust in the same rank with Livy; and unquestionably the small portion of his works which has come down to us is calculated to give a high opinion of his talents. But his style is not very pleasant: and his most powerful work, the account of the Conspiracy of Catiline, has rather the air of a clever party pamphlet than that of a history. It abounds with strange inconsistencies, which, unexplained as they are, necessarily excite doubts as to the fairness of the narrative. It is true, that many circumstances now forgotten may have been familiar to his contemporaries, and may have rendered passages clear to them which to us appear dubious and perplexing. But a great historian should remember that he writes for distant generations, for men who will perceive the apparent contradictions, and will possess no means of reconciling them. We can only vindicate

the fidelity of Sallust at the expense of his skill. But in fact all the information which we have from contemporaries respecting this famous plot is liable to the same objection, and is read by discerning men with the same incredulity. It is all on one side. No answer has reached our times. . . .

Of the Latin historians, Tacitus was certainly the greatest. His style, indeed, is not only faulty in itself, but is, in some respects, peculiarly unfit for historical composition. He carries his love of effect far beyond the limits of moderation. He tells a fine story finely: but he cannot tell a plain story plainly. He stimulates till stimulants lose their power. Thucydides, as we have already observed, relates ordinary transactions with the unpretending clearness and succinctness of a gazette. His great powers of painting he reserves for events of which the slightest details are interesting. The simplicity of the setting gives additional luster to the brilliants. There are passages in the narrative of Tacitus superior to the best which can be quoted from Thucydides.

But they are not enchased and relieved with the same skill. They are far more striking when extracted from the body of the work to which they belong than when they occur in their place, and are read in connection with what precedes and follows.

In the delineation of character, Tacitus is unrivaled among historians, and has very few superiors among dramatists and novelists. By the delineation of character, we do not mean the practice of drawing up epigrammatic catalogues of good and bad qualities, and appending them to the names of eminent men. No writer, indeed, has done this more skillfully than Tacitus ; but this is not his peculiar glory. All the persons who occupy a large space in his works have an individuality of character which seems to pervade all their words and actions. We know them as if we had lived with them. Claudius, Nero, Otho, both the Agrippinas, are master-pieces. But Tiberius is a still higher miracle of art. The historian undertook to make us intimately acquainted with a man singularly dark and inscrutable,—

with a man whose real disposition long remained swathed up in intricate folds of factitious virtues, and over those actions the hypocrisy of his youth, and the seclusion of his old age, threw a singular mystery. He was to exhibit the specious qualities of the tyrant in a light which might render them transparent, and enable us at once to perceive the covering and the vices which it concealed. He was to trace the gradations by which the first magistrate of a republic, a senator mingling freely in debate, a noble associating with his brother nobles, was transformed into an Asiatic sultan; he was to exhibit a character, distinguished by courage, self-command, and profound policy, yet defiled by all

“th’ extravagancy
And crazy ribaldry of fancy.”

He was to mark the gradual effect of advancing age and approaching death on this strange compound of strength and weakness; to exhibit the old sovereign of the world sinking into a dotage which, though it

rendered his appetites eccentric, and his temper savage, never impaired the powers of his stern and penetrating mind—conscious of failing strength, raging with capricious sensuality, yet to the last the keenest of observers, the most artful of dissemblers, and the most terrible of masters. The task was one of extreme difficulty. The execution is almost perfect.

The talent which is required to write history thus bears a considerable affinity to the talent of a great dramatist. There is one obvious distinction. The dramatist creates; the historian only disposes. The difference is not in the mode of execution, but in the mode of conception. Shakspeare is guided by a model which exists in his imagination; Tacitus, by a model furnished from without. Hamlet is to Tiberius what the Laocoön is to the Newton of Roubilliac. In this part of his art Tacitus certainly had neither equal nor second among the ancient historians. . . .

We begin, like the priest in Don Quixote's library, to be tired with taking down books one after another for separate judgment,

and feel inclined to pass sentence on them in masses. We shall therefore, instead of pointing out the defects and merits of the different modern historians, state generally in what particulars they have surpassed their predecessors, and in what we conceive them to have failed.

They have certainly been, in one sense, far more strict in their adherence to truth than most of the Greek and Roman writers. They do not think themselves entitled to render their narrative interesting by introducing descriptions, conversations, and harangues which have no existence but in their own imagination. This improvement was gradually introduced. History commenced among the modern nations of Europe, as it had commenced among the Greeks, in romance. Froissart was our Herodotus. Italy was to Europe what Athens was to Greece. In Italy, therefore, a more accurate and manly mode of narration was early introduced. Machiavelli and Guicciardini, in imitation of Livy and Thucydides, composed speeches for their historical personages.

But, as the classical enthusiasm which distinguished the age of Lorenzo and Leo gradually subsided, this absurd practice was abandoned. In France, we fear, it still, in some degree, keeps its ground. In our own country, a writer who should venture on it would be laughed to scorn. Whether the historians of the last two centuries tell more truth than those of antiquity, may perhaps be doubted. But it is quite certain that they tell fewer falsehoods.

In the philosophy of history, the moderns have very far surpassed the ancients. It is not, indeed, strange that the Greeks and Romans should not have carried the science of government, or any other experimental science, so far as it has been carried in our time ; for the experimental sciences are generally in a state of progression. They were better understood in the seventeenth century than in the sixteenth, and in the eighteenth century than in the seventeenth. But this constant improvement, this natural growth of knowledge, will not altogether account for the immense superiority of the modern

writers. The difference is a difference not in degree but of kind. It is not merely that new principles have been discovered, but that new faculties seem to be exerted. It is not that at one time the human intellect should have made but small progress, and at another time have advanced far ; but that at one time it should have been stationary, and at another time constantly proceeding. In taste and imagination, in the graces of style, in the arts of persuasion, in the magnificence of public works, the ancients were at least our equals. They reasoned as justly as ourselves on subjects which required pure demonstration. But in the moral sciences they made scarcely any advance. During the long period which elapsed between the fifth century before the Christian era and the fifth century after it little perceptible progress was made. All the metaphysical discoveries of all the philosophers, from the time of Socrates to the northern invasion, are not to be compared in importance with those which have been made in England every fifty years since the time of Elizabeth. There is not

the least reason to believe that the principles of government, legislation, and political economy, were better understood in the time of Augustus Cæsar than in the time of Pericles. In our own country, the sound doctrines of trade and jurisprudence have been, within the lifetime of a single generation, dimly hinted, boldly propounded, defended, systematized, adopted by all reflecting men of all parties, quoted in legislative assemblies, incorporated into laws and treaties.

To what is this change to be attributed? Partly, no doubt, to the discovery of printing, a discovery which has not only diffused knowledge widely, but, as we have already observed, has also introduced into reasoning a precision unknown in those ancient communities, in which information was, for the most part, conveyed orally. There was, we suspect, another cause, less obvious, but still more powerful.

The spirit of the two most famous nations of antiquity was remarkably exclusive. In the time of Homer the Greeks had not begun to consider themselves as a distinct race. . . .

But it is certain that a great alteration took place. They regarded themselves as a separate people. They had common religious rites, and common principles of public law, in which foreigners had no part. In all their political systems, monarchical, aristocratical, and democratical, there was a strong family likeness. After the retreat of Xerxes and the fall of Mardonius, national pride rendered the separation between the Greeks and the barbarians complete. The conquerors considered themselves men of a superior breed, men who, in their intercourse with neighboring nations, were to teach and not to learn. They looked for nothing out of themselves. They borrowed nothing. They translated nothing. We cannot call to mind a single expression of any Greek writer earlier than the age of Augustus, indicating an opinion that anything worth reading could be written in any language except his own. The feelings which sprung from national glory were not altogether extinguished by national degradation. They were fondly cherished through ages of slavery and shame. The literature

of Rome herself was regarded with contempt by those who had fled before her arms, and who bowed beneath her fasces. . . .

The Romans submitted to the pretensions of a race which they despised. Their epic poet, while he claimed for them pre-eminence in the arts of government and war, acknowledged their inferiority in taste, eloquence, and science. Men of letters affected to understand the Greek language better than their own. . . . Many eminent Romans appear to have felt the same contempt for their native tongue as compared with the Greek. The prejudice continued to a very late period. Julian was as partial to the Greek language as Frederic the Great to the French : and it seems that he could not express himself with elegance in the dialect of the state which he ruled.

Even those Latin writers who did not carry this affectation so far looked on Greece as the only fount of knowledge. From Greece they derived the measures of their poetry, and, indeed, all of poetry that can be imported. From Greece they borrowed

the principles and the vocabulary of their philosophy. To the literature of other nations they do not seem to have paid the slightest attention. The sacred books of the Hebrews, for example, books which, considered merely as human compositions, are invaluable to the critic, the antiquarian, and the philosopher, seem to have been utterly unnoticed by them. The peculiarities of Judaism, and the rapid growth of Christianity attracted their notice. They made war against the Jews. They made laws against the Christians. But they never opened the books of Moses. Juvenal quotes the Pentateuch with censure. The author of the treatise on "the Sublime" quotes it with praise: but both of them quote it erroneously. When we consider what sublime poetry, what curious history, what striking and peculiar views of the Divine nature and of the social duties of men, are to be found in the Jewish scriptures, when we consider that two sects on which the attention of the government was constantly fixed appealed to those scriptures as the rule of their faith

and practice, this indifference is astonishing. The fact seems to be, that the Greeks admired only themselves, and that the Romans admired only themselves and the Greeks. . . .

The vast despotism of the Cæsars, gradually effacing all national peculiarities, and assimilating the remotest provinces of the empire to each other, augmented the evil. At the close of the third century after Christ, the prospects of mankind were fearfully dreary. A system of etiquette, as pompously frivolous as that of the Escorial, had been established. A sovereign almost invisible; a crowd of dignitaries minutely distinguished by badges and titles; rhetoricians who said nothing but what had been said ten thousand times; schools in which nothing was taught but what had been known for ages: such was the machinery provided for the government and instruction of the most enlightened part of the human race. . . .

The torpor was broken by two great revolutions, the one moral, the other political; the one from within, the other from without

The victory of Christianity over Paganism, considered with relation to this subject only, was of great importance. It overthrew the old system of morals ; and with it much of the old system of metaphysics. It furnished the orator with new topics of declamation, and the logician with new points of controversy. Above all, it introduced a new principle, of which the operation was constantly felt in every part of society. It stirred the stagnant mass from the inmost depths. It excited all the passions of a stormy democracy in the quiet and listless population of an overgrown empire. The fear of heresy did what the sense of oppression could not do ; it changed men, accustomed to be turned over like sheep from tyrant to tyrant, into devoted partisans and obstinate rebels. The tones of an eloquence which had been silent for ages resounded from the pulpit of Gregory. A spirit which had been extinguished on the plains of Phillippi revived in Athanasius and Ambrose.

Yet even this remedy was not sufficiently violent for the disease. It did not prevent

the empire of Constantinople from relapsing, after a short paroxysm of excitement, into a state of stupefaction, in which history furnishes scarcely any parallel. We there find that a polished society, a society in which a most intricate and elaborate system of jurisprudence was established, in which the arts of luxury were well understood, in which the works of the great ancient writers were preserved and studied, existed for nearly a thousand years without making one great discovery in science, or producing one book which is read by any but curious inquirers. . . .

From this miserable state the Western Empire was saved by the fiercest and most destroying visitation with which God has ever chastened his creatures—the invasion of the Northern nations. Such a cure was required for such a distemper. The fire of London, it has been observed, was a blessing. It burned down the city; but it burned out the plague. The same may be said of the tremendous devastation of the Roman dominions. It annihilated the noisome recesses in which lurked the seeds of great

moral maladies ; it cleared an atmosphere fatal to the health and vigor of the human mind. It cost Europe a thousand years of barbarism to escape the fate of China.

At length the terrible purification was accomplished ; and the second civilization of mankind commenced, under circumstances which afforded a strong security that it would never retrograde and never pause. Europe was now a great federal community. Her numerous states were united by the easy ties of international law and a common religion. Their institutions, their languages, their manners, their tastes in literature, their modes of education, were widely different. Their connection was close enough to allow of mutual observation and improvement, yet not so close as to destroy the idioms of national opinion and feeling.

The balance of moral and intellectual influence thus established between the nations of Europe is far more important than the balance of political power. Indeed, we are inclined to think that the latter is valuable principally because it tends to maintain the

former. The civilized world has thus been preserved from an uniformity of character fatal to all improvement. Every part of it has been illuminated with light reflected from every other. Competition has produced activity where monopoly would have produced sluggishness. The number of experiments in moral science which the speculator has an opportunity of witnessing has been increased beyond all calculation. Society and human nature, instead of being seen in a single point of view, are presented to him under ten thousand different aspects. By observing the manners of surrounding nations, by studying their literature, by comparing it with that of his own country and of the ancient republics, he is enabled to correct those errors into which the most acute men must fall when they reason from a single species to a genus. He learns to distinguish what is local from what is universal ; what is transitory from what is eternal ; to discriminate between exceptions and rules ; to trace the operation of disturbing causes ; to separate those general principles

which are always true and everywhere applicable from the accidental circumstances with which, in every community, they are blended, and with which, in an isolated community, they are confounded by the most philosophical mind.

Hence it is that, in generalization, the writers of modern times have far surpassed those of antiquity. The historians of our own country are unequaled in depth and precision of reason; and, even in the works of our mere compilers, we often meet with speculations beyond the reach of Thucydides or Tacitus.

But it must, at the same time, be admitted that they have characteristic faults, so closely connected with their characteristic merits, and of such magnitude, that it may well be doubted whether, on the whole, this department of literature has gained or lost during the last two-and-twenty centuries.

The best historians of later times have been seduced from truth, not by their imagination, but by their reason. They far excel their predecessors in the art of

deducing general principles from facts. But unhappily they have fallen into the error of distorting facts to suit general principles. They arrive at a theory from looking at some of the phenomena; and the remaining phenomena they strain or curtail to suit the theory. For this purpose it is not necessary that they should assert what is absolutely false; for all questions in morals and politics are questions of comparison and degree. Any proposition which does not involve a contradiction in terms may by possibility be true; and, if all the circumstances which raise a probability in its favor be stated and enforced, and those which lead to an opposite conclusion be omitted or lightly passed over it may appear to be demonstrated. In every human character and transaction there is a mixture of good and evil: a little exaggeration, a little suppression, a judicious use of epithets, a watchful and searching scepticism with respect to the evidence on one side, a convenient credulity with respect to every report or tradition on the other, may easily make a saint of Laud, or a tyrant of Henry the Fourth. . . .

Hume is an accomplished advocate. Without positively asserting much more than he can prove, he gives prominence to all the circumstances which support his case, he glides lightly over those which are unfavorable to it ; his own witnesses are applauded and encouraged ; the statements which seem to throw discredit on them are controverted ; the contradictions into which they fall are explained away ; a clear and connected abstract of their evidence is given. Everything that is offered on the other side is scrutinized with the utmost severity ; every suspicious circumstance is a ground for comment and invective ; what cannot be denied is extenuated, or passed by without notice ; concessions even are sometimes made : but this insidious candor only increases the effect of the vast mass of sophistry.

¶ We have mentioned Hume as the ablest and most popular writer of his class ; but the charge which we have brought against him is one to which all our most distinguished historians are in some degree obnoxious. . . .

The practice of distorting narrative into a conformity with theory is a vice not so unfavorable as at first sight it may appear to the interests of political science. We have compared the writers who indulge in it to advocates; and we may add, that their conflicting fallacies, like those of advocates, correct each other. It has always been held, in the most enlightened nations, that a tribunal will decide a judicial question most fairly when it has heard two able men argue, as unfairly as possible, on the two opposite sides of it; and we are inclined to think that this opinion is just. Sometimes, it is true, superior eloquence and dexterity will make the worse appear the better reason; but it is at least certain that the judge will be compelled to contemplate the case under two different aspects. It is certain that no important consideration will altogether escape notice.

This is at present the state of history. . . . While our historians are practising all the arts of controversy, they miserably neglect the art of narration, the art of inter-

esting the affections and presenting pictures to the imagination. That a writer may produce these effects without violating truth is sufficiently proved by many excellent biographical works. The immense popularity which well-written books of this kind have acquired deserves the serious consideration of historians. Voltaire's *Charles the Twelfth*, Marmontel's *Memoirs*, Boswell's *Life of Johnson*, Southey's account of Nelson, are perused with delight by the most frivolous and indolent. Whenever any tolerable book of the same description makes its appearance, the circulating libraries are mobbed; the book societies are in commotion; the new novel lies uncut; the magazines and newspapers fill their columns with extracts. In the meantime histories of great empires, written by men of eminent ability, lie unread on the shelves of ostentatious libraries.

The writers of history seem to entertain an aristocratical contempt for the writers of memoirs. They think it beneath the dignity of men who describe the evolutions of nations to dwell on the details which constitute the

charm of biography. They have imposed on themselves a code of conventional decencies as absurd as that which has been the bane of the French drama. The most characteristic and interesting circumstances are omitted or softened down, because, as we are told, they are too trivial for the majesty of history. The majesty of history seems to resemble the majesty of the poor King of Spain, who died a martyr to ceremony because the proper dignitaries were not at hand to render him assistance.

That history would be more amusing if this etiquette were relaxed will, we suppose, be acknowledged. But would it be less dignified or less useful? What do we mean when we say that one past event is important and another insignificant? No past event has any intrinsic importance. The knowledge of it is valuable only as it leads us to form just calculations with respect to the future. A history which does not serve this purpose, though it may be filled with battles, treaties, and commotions, is as useless as the series of turnpike tickets collected by Sir Matthew Mite. . . .

A history in which every particular incident may be true may on the whole be false. The circumstances which have most influence on the happiness of mankind, the changes of manners and morals, the transition of communities from poverty to wealth, from knowledge to ignorance, from ferocity to humanity—these are, for the most part, noiseless revolutions. Their progress is rarely indicated by what historians are pleased to call important events. They are not achieved by armies, or enacted by senates. They are sanctioned by no treaties and recorded in no archives. They are carried on in every school, in every church, behind ten thousand counters, at ten thousand firesides. The upper current of society presents no certain criterion by which we can judge of the direction in which the under current flows. We read of defeats and victories. But we know that nations may be miserable amidst victories and prosperous amidst defeats. We read of the fall of wise ministers and of the rise of profligate favorites. But we must remember how small a proportion the good

or evil effected by a single statesman can bear to the good or evil of a great social system.

Bishop Watson compares a geologist to a gnat mounted on an elephant, and laying down theories as to the whole internal structure of the vast animal, from the phenomena of the hide. The comparison is unjust to the geologists ; but it is very applicable to those historians who write as if the body politic were homogeneous, who look only on the surface of affairs, and never think of the mighty and various organization which lies deep below. . . .

The effect of historical reading is analogous, in many respects, to that produced by foreign travel. The student, like the tourist, is transported into a new state of society. He sees new fashions. He hears new modes of expression. His mind is enlarged by contemplating the wide diversities of laws, of morals, and of manners. But men may travel far, and return with minds as contracted as if they had never stirred from their own market-town. In the same manner, men

may know the dates of many battles and the genealogies of many royal houses, and yet be no wiser. Most people look at past times as princes look at foreign countries. More than one illustrious stranger has landed on our island amidst the shouts of a mob, has dined with the king, has hunted with the master of the stag-hounds, has seen the guards reviewed, and a knight of the garter installed, has cantered along Regent Street, has visited St. Paul's, and noted down its dimensions ; and has then departed, thinking that he has seen England. He has, in fact, seen a few public buildings, public men, and public ceremonies. But of the vast and complex system of society, of the fine shades of national character, of the practical operation of government and laws, he knows nothing. He who would understand these things rightly must not confine his observations to palaces and solemn days. He must see ordinary men as they appear in their ordinary business and in their ordinary pleasures. He must mingle in the crowds of the exchange and the coffee-house. He must

obtain admittance to the convivial table and the domestic hearth. He must bear with vulgar expressions. He must not shrink from exploring even the retreats of misery. He who wishes to understand the condition of mankind in former ages must proceed on the same principle. If he attends only to public transactions, to wars, congresses, and debates, his studies will be as unprofitable as the travels of those imperial, royal, and serene sovereigns who form their judgment of our island from having gone in state to a few fine sights, and from having held formal conferences with a few great officers.

The perfect historian is he in whose work the character and spirit of an age is exhibited in miniature. He relates no fact, he attributes no expression to his characters, which is not authenticated by sufficient testimony. But, by judicious selection, rejection, and arrangement, he gives to truth those attractions which have been usurped by fiction. In his narrative a due subordination is observed: some transactions are prominent; others retire. But the scale on which he rep-

resents them is increased or diminished, not according to the dignity of the persons concerned in them, but according to the degree in which they elucidate the condition of society and the nature of man. He shows us the court, the camp, and the senate. But he shows us also the nation. He considers no anecdote, no peculiarity of manner, no familiar saying, as too insignificant for his notice which is not too insignificant to illustrate the operation of laws, of religion, and of education, and to mark the progress of the human mind. Men will not merely be described, but will be made intimately known to us. The changes of manners will be indicated, not merely by a few general phrases or a few extracts from statistical documents, but by appropriate images presented in every line.

If a man, such as we are supposing, should write the history of England, he would assuredly not omit the battles, the sieges, the negotiations, the seditions, the ministerial changes. But with these he would intersperse the details which are the charm

of historical romances. At Lincoln Cathedral there is a beautiful painted window, which was made by an apprentice out of the pieces of glass which had been rejected by his master. It is so far superior to every other in the church, that, according to the tradition, the vanquished artist killed himself from mortification. Sir Walter Scott, in the same manner, has used those fragments of truth which historians have scornfully thrown behind them in a manner which may well excite their envy. He has constructed out of their gleanings works which even considered as histories, are scarcely less valuable than theirs. But a truly great historian would reclaim those materials which the novelist has appropriated. The history of the government, and the history of the people, would be exhibited in that mode in which alone they can be exhibited justly, in inseparable conjunction and intermixture. We should not then have to look for the wars and votes of the Puritans in Clarendon, and for their phraseology in Old Mortality; for one half of King James in

: . . .

Hume, and for the other half in the Fortunes of Nigel.

The early part of our imaginary history would be rich with coloring from romance, ballad, and chronicle. We should find ourselves in the company of knights such as those of Froissart, and of pilgrims such as those who rode with Chaucer from the Tabard. Society would be shown from the highest to the lowest,—from the royal cloth of state to the den of the outlaw ; from the throne of the legate, to the chimney-corner where the begging friar regaled himself. Palmers, minstrels, crusaders,—the stately monastery, with the good cheer in its refectory and the high-mass in its chapel,—the manor-house, with its hunting and hawking,—the tournament, with the heralds and ladies, the trumpets and the cloth of gold,—would give truth and life to the representation. We should perceive, in a thousand slight touches, the importance of the privileged burgher, and the fierce and haughty spirit which swelled under the collar of the degraded villain. The revival of let-

ters would not merely be described in a few magnificent periods. We should discern, in innumerable particulars, the fermentation of mind, the eager appetite for knowledge, which distinguished the sixteenth from the fifteenth century. In the Reformation we should see, not merely a schism which changed the ecclesiastical constitution of England and the mutual relations of the European powers, but a moral war which raged in every family, which set the father against the son, and the son against the father, the mother against the daughter, and the daughter against the mother. Henry would be painted with the skill of Tacitus. We should have the change of his character from his profuse and joyous youth to his savage and imperious old age. We should perceive the gradual progress of selfish and tyrannical passions in a mind not naturally insensible or ungenerous ; and to the last we should detect some remains of that open and noble temper which endeared him to a people whom he oppressed, struggling with the hardness of despotism and the irritability of

disease. We should see Elizabeth in all her weakness and in all her strength, surrounded by the handsome favorites whom she never trusted, and the wise old statesmen whom she never dismissed, uniting in herself the most contradictory qualities of both her parents,—the coquetry, the caprice, the petty malice of Anne,—the haughty and resolute spirit of Henry. We have no hesitation in saying that a great artist might produce a portrait of this remarkable woman at least as striking as that in the novel of *Kenilworth*, without employing a single trait not authenticated by ample testimony. In the meantime, we should see arts cultivated, wealth accumulated, the conveniences of life improved. We should see the keeps, where nobles, insecure themselves, spread insecurity around them, gradually giving place to the halls of peaceful opulence, to the oriels of Longleat, and the stately pinnacles of Burleigh. We should see towns extended, deserts cultivated, the hamlets of fishermen turned into wealthy havens, and the meal of the peasant im-

proved, and his hut more commodiously furnished. We should see those opinions and feelings which produced the great struggle against the house of Stuart slowly growing up in the bosom of private families, before they manifested themselves in parliamentary debates. Then would come the civil war. Those skirmishes on which Clarendon dwells so minutely would be told, as Thucydides would have told them, with perspicuous conciseness. They are merely connecting links. But the great characteristics of the age, the loyal enthusiasm of the brave English gentry, the fierce licentiousness of the swearing, dicing, drunken reprobates, whose excesses disgrace the royal cause,—the austerity of the Presbyterian Sabbaths in the city, the extravagance of the independent preachers in the camp, the precise garb, the severe countenance, the petty scruples, the affected accent, the absurd names and phrases which marked the Puritans,—the valor, the policy, the public spirit, which lurked beneath these ungraceful disguises,—the dreams of the

raving Fifth-monarchy-man, the dreams, scarcely less wild, of the philosophic republican,—all these would enter into the representation, and render it at once more exact and more striking.

The instruction derived from history thus written would be of a vivid and practical character. It would be received by the imagination as well as by the reason. It would be not merely traced on the mind, but branded into it. Many truths, too, would be learned, which can be learned in no other manner. As the history of states is generally written, the greatest and most momentous revolutions seem to come upon them like supernatural inflictions, without warning or cause. But the fact is, that such revolutions are almost always the consequences of moral changes, which have gradually passed on the mass of the community, and which ordinarily proceed far before their progress is indicated by any public measure. An intimate knowledge of the domestic history of nations is therefore absolutely necessary to the prognosis of polit-

ical events. A narrative, defective in this respect, is as useless as a medical treatise which should pass by all the symptoms attendant on the early stage of a disease and mention only what occurs when the patient is beyond the reach of remedies.

A historian, such as we have been attempting to describe, would indeed be an intellectual prodigy. In his mind, powers scarcely compatible with each other must be tempered into an exquisite harmony. We shall sooner see another Shakspeare or another Homer. The highest excellence to which any single faculty can be brought would be less surprising than such a happy and delicate combination of qualities. Yet the contemplation of imaginary models is not an unpleasant or useless employment of the mind. It cannot indeed produce perfection ; but it produces improvement, and nourishes that generous and liberal fastidiousness which is not inconsistent with the strongest sensibility to merit, and which, while it exalts our conceptions of the art does not render us unjust to the artist.

II

THE HISTORICAL IMAGINATION

ARTHUR PENRHYN STANLEY

II.

THE HISTORICAL IMAGINATION.

BY ARTHUR PENRHYN STANLEY.

EVERY one knows the story, that when Sir Walter Raleigh was writing the "History of the World," in the Tower of London, he overheard two boys quarreling over the facts of an incident that had happened the day before, and said to himself, "If these two boys cannot agree on an event which occurred almost before their own eyes, how can any one be profited by the narrative which I am writing of events which occurred in ages long past?" Like to this is the story that Sir Robert Walpole, when some one in his old age offered to read to him a volume of history, replied, "Anything but history: I, by my long political experience, know that all history is lying."

The sentiment expressed by these two celebrated men finds a response in many minds, when they are invited to judge of the value of history. It is a natural objection founded on the supposed impossibility of arriving at the truth of past events. And to this has been added in modern times the yet deeper prejudice that the narrative of human affairs, with its complexities, uncertainties, and ambiguities, falls into the shade before the steadfast, immovable, demonstrable march of scientific truth.

To both of these objections the answer may be found in the primary sense of the word "History." It means an inquiry, a sifting, a cross-examination of previous events, with the endeavor of eliciting from them their most vital and essential points.

First, even with regard to that more superficial difficulty suggested by the two English statesmen, it may be truly said that the careful history of the complex events of past times is more to be depended upon than the conflicting statements of contemporaries and eye-witnesses, such as bred in Sir Walter

Raleigh and Sir Robert Walpole an incurable suspicion of all history. At the time when events are taking place, rumors, passions, prejudices, combine in obscuring both the facts themselves and the minds by which those facts are received. It is only after years have elapsed that the documents, the letters, the despatches, the rectifications of contradictions, are fully brought to light; and thus the narratives of careful historians are almost always more trustworthy than any single narratives of those who lived at the time. It is in this aspect of history that the value of what may be called its antiquarian accessories comes most fully to view. Traditions of personages unknown at the time, but handed on from generation to generation, may in the century afterwards, for the first time, appear above the surface and then become imbedded in the solid substratum of the whole record. Legal documents, state papers, which could not be seen by passing partisans, are revealed at Simancas or the Vatican, or in the Venetian archives, to the careful inquirer; and in this

way truth is discovered and falsehood exposed by methods which the aged statesman could not disclose nor the two boys in the street have known. There is an ancient maxim, *Quod non est in actis non fuit in factis* ("What cannot be proved by legal acts cannot have a place in historic facts"); but it is equally true, *Quod est in actis fuit in factis* ("What is witnessed in a legal act is the best proof of what has actually occurred in fact"). The story of Edway's marriage with Elgiva, or of Tracy's shipwreck on the coast of Apulia, long discredited, has been corroborated beyond dispute by finding signatures, under particular circumstances, attached to a charter or a will. Geography also contributes its consolidating testimony. When every living witness has perished, the mountain and the river still remain to bear testimony to the accuracy of some narrative which, without these dumb attestations, would have remained in doubt. There is nothing so permanent, said a distinguished antiquarian scholar, as that which is "writ in water;" a spring, a pool may carry

conviction of the identity of a locality and an event when every work of man around it has disappeared.

Secondly, it is in the power of a careful historian by this sifting process to reproduce the events of the time as they would have appeared, not merely to one or two bystanders, but to the general mind of the period. The saying of the Duke of Wellington, that a battle is like a ball, in which no one knows what is going on except in the particular part in which he is engaged, may be true enough at the moment; but it is the privilege of the military historian to make himself present in all the parts of the battle at once, and thus to place the reader in the position not merely of one who is engaged in a particular battalion, but of one who follows battalion from battalion to every part of the field. It is this which makes Macaulay's "History of England" so pre-eminently attractive. We sometimes hear the complaint brought against it that it cannot be true, because it is as interesting as a romance. Rather we may reverse the complaint, and

say, that because it is interesting as a romance, and because the events of the time in which we live are more interesting than any romance to those who enter into them keenly, therefore the probability is that an history so exciting is true. Where, for example, as in the trial of the seven bishops, the historian has reproduced the whole scene from a collection of innumerable particulars in caricatures, gazettes, private letters, public pleadings, we have a security that the event is placed before us, it may be, perhaps, as it would have appeared to an active partisan, but still to a partisan who took in, as far as possible, all the streams of excitement with which the atmosphere was at that time pervaded.

Thirdly, it is almost a necessary process of the sifting and critical character of history that the faculty of discrimination, the sense of proportion, so necessary to a right appreciation of all events, should be brought into operation. The fury of party spirit, however much it may be prolonged in ages subsequent to the events which called it

forth, is at any rate brought under some kind of control ; and characters, like Joan of Arc or Spinoza, which were utterly beyond the reach of the contending factions of the time to discern, assume, as before a divine judgment-seat, something of their true value ; and it is in this respect that history assumes one of its noblest attributes, because it tends to keep alive in the human mind that detestation of evil and that admiration of good which form the most secure guarantees of the immortality of the human spirit. When Matthew Paris, the best of early English chroniclers, questioned in his own mind whether it was worth his while to attempt the history of his country, he was consoled by the reflection of the sacred text, "The just shall be had in everlasting remembrance." It is because history keeps the just in everlasting remembrance, separates the just from the unjust, and preserves the balance between the complex shades of all the characters which hover in the interval, that it has become an important element in religion itself. No doubt the principle of re-

ligion in the human mind is independent of any external facts, whether of science or history; but the sense of solidity given by history to the conception of those great spiritual qualities which are of the essence of religion, is of itself an almost indispensable aid to the continuance of religion in the heart of man.

Fourthly, the careful and impartial investigation of facts, so far from reducing history to a merely prosaic description or calendar of passing events, brings it at once within the reach and demands the assistance of the highest exercise of imagination. It was not without reason that the ancients represented Clio, the genius of history, to be the first of the Muses. In many branches of theology and of philosophy the first requirement is to perceive likenesses in the midst of differences; but in history almost the first requirement is to be able to see unlikenesses in the midst of similarities. Nothing is more difficult than to form an adequate conception of the vast differences which exist between our own epoch and

those which have gone before, and it is in the reproduction of these differences in all their vividness that the imaginative quality of the historian is most constantly demanded. No merely contemporaneous records, unless summed up by the calm investigation and vivifying imagination of later times, can give an insight into the dark, perhaps inscrutable problem of the laws by which the course of human events is regulated. The petty motives, the small contradictions, which occupied the whole horizon of Sir Robert Walpole in his declining age, and of the boys whom Sir Walter Raleigh saw from his prison-window, prevent that wide judgment which alone can take in the various and multiform elements which, from a more distant view, can be perceived. It has been sometimes said that there are only two fields of life in which the idea of an overruling Providence is forced upon the mind of man: One is the contemplation of his own individual experiences. That is autobiography; the other is the progress of events on the largest scale. That is the philosophy of history.

Two groups of instances may be given to illustrate this view of historic philosophy. One is the succession of race to race, of religion to religion, of genius to genius, which to the ancient local chronicler was almost impossible, but which to the modern historian has become almost a new revelation, almost a second nature. The earliest glimpse of this truth appears in the Book of Daniel; when empire after empire, each with its successive guardian angel, passes before the mind of the prophet. It reached its full development when in our time complete expression was given to it in Lessing's "Education of the Human Race," or in Hegel's "Philosophy of History." Comparative mythology, comparative religion, the detection of modern elements in ancient history and of ancient elements in modern history, the general survey of manners, as by Voltaire or Montesquieu, all pertain to this wider investigation of human concerns, and invest it with a philosophic, if not a scientific aspect.

Another group is that which fixes the mind on what may be called the dramatic and tragical aspect of the life of man. It is true that

this aspect will strike contemporary beholders from the constraining power of natural sympathy; but still, in order for such incidents to have their full force, they must be elevated into a region beyond the obscuring influences of local and personal passions. The failure of the Athenian expedition to Syracuse, the murder of Julius Cæsar, the death of Mary Queen of Scots or Charles the First, have an effect on later days such as they could not have produced amidst the disturbing excitements of the moment—that is to say, the appeal to the purely sympathetic, compassionate, and, in the highest sense of the word, philanthropic emotions of the heart, strikes only with full force when the incidents loom through the shadows of the past without entanglement in the small and trivial particularities of the moment. These critical and catastrophic incidents give to history a richness from which the milk of human kindness and the fire of human passion will always be drawn in unfailing abundance. It is thus that the historical books of the Old Testament were in former times included amongst the books of the Prophets. It is thus

that when historians have been not merely chroniclers but men of genius, their histories rise to the rank of finished works of art. The collision of Asia with Europe as described by Herodotus, is an epic. The vicissitudes of the Peloponnesian war as presented by Thucydides, the lights and shadows of the reign of Tiberius and his successors as presented by Tacitus, are tragedies. The narrative of the decline and fall of the Roman Empire, by Gibbon, of the English Revolution, by Macaulay, where every chapter, every sentence, almost every word, are written with a view to the whole, might stand in the Palace of Art side by side with the Parthenon or the Paradise Lost. The romances of Walter Scott, with all their inaccuracies, are by reason of the marvelous insight of their author into the characteristics of former times, ingredients of the best kind of historical instruction. "Where have you learned the history of England?" it was asked of the greatest statesman of the last century. As Raleigh and Walpole began, so Lord Chatham's reply shall end these words—"In the Plays of Shakspeare."

III
**JUDGMENTS OF GREAT
LEADERS**

JAMES ANTHONY FROUDE

III.

JUDGMENTS OF GREAT LEADERS.

BY JAMES ANTHONY FROUDE.

How shall we consider those famous persons without whom neither poets could have sung, nor artists have produced images of beauty, nor men of science, and prophets, have taught truth and the obligations of conscience? School and Temple can only flourish where there is order and good government: and order and government, though they rise spontaneously in some form or other wherever human beings are collected together, yet have been shaped always, and reshaped and modified, by the intellectual superiority of determined and gifted individuals.

To these rulers of mankind, to the men who have organized nations, made laws

obeyed, and written their names in history, the consent of the world has given the title of *great*, or the *greatest*, because their actions have produced effects which it has been impossible to refuse to acknowledge, and have been on a scale and of a kind to impress the imagination and to command universal attention. But with the admission of their claim to be distinguished the consent generally ends; and the greatness allowed to them means no more than that they were exceptionally powerful. That certain persons have achieved power, and made their wills obeyed, is a fact not to be questioned; but whether their power has been for good or for evil, whether they were men to be admired for their virtues, or abhorred and execrated, as enemies of their kind, there is in most instances, and probably always will be, a serious difference of opinion. Cicero foretold truly that the character of Cæsar would be disputed over to the end of time.

Thus, while the chiefs of Art and Science sit honored on their thrones, without danger

of further challenge, no such acquiescence has yet been found in the claims of the kings of men ; and the explanation of the difference is easily perceived. Poets and artists may be objects of envy while they are alive, but the pleasure which they give is constant, and they rarely leave occasion for permanent ill-will. Their rivals die, and detraction dies with them, and succeeding generations admit willingly an excellence which is no longer the excellence of a competitor. The statesman, on the other hand, has enemies who never die. He represents some principle, or principles, which are perennial, and which are perpetually in collision with other principles no less vital and enduring. His success represents the triumph of a political party. His name is an immortal symbol, which challenges either admiration or animosity.

Nor is this the only cause. If we could see a great historical king or minister clearly and distinctly, we might admire the man, though we disapproved his policy ; but from the nature of the case we see imperfectly, and we depend on our imagination to

complete the picture. The principles for which he contended may be clear, the outline of his actions may be clear. But the details are lost ; the age in which he lived is swept away, with its passions, its beliefs, and the accidents of surrounding circumstances. His work is gone—gone beyond reach, beyond power of enchanter to recall, and nothing is left but an imperfect description of it. The more fortunate artist leaves his work behind him, to tell us the quality of its author. The great sculptor's statue is in our hands as he shaped it ; we see it with our eyes ; we measure and examine it at our leisure ; we are not at the mercy of the reports of others. Words appear the most fleeting of all things, but words beautifully arranged, and with a beautiful meaning in them, have proved the most enduring of all things. We have Horace still present with us ; he has left a monument of himself " more enduring than brass." Shakspeare can say that the Pyramids shall not " outlive his powerful Rhyme." Kings, less fortunate, write their histories in water. While they

are alive all eyes are on them, all tongues are speaking of them. They die, and the generation dies which knew them ; and they are left to the mercy of tradition, which is generous or ungenerous according to the temper of the time.

In generous ages, the bad is forgotten, the good is remembered and magnified ; the great man is made a God, or Demigod, or Saint ; but the legendary robes hide often altogether the real figure. Ungenerous ages leave us malicious libels or caricatures, not less misleading, even if some resemblance is preserved. Even contemporary authorities do not much improve our position. It has been truly said—

“die Zeiten der Vergangenheit
Sind uns ein Buch mit sieben Siegeln.”

It is not always the truest account of a man which survives, but the most smartly written. In all societies the most eminent persons are the surest marks for scandal, and nothing gives wider pleasure. If we do not always believe scandalous stories about such persons,

they amuse us, and we remember and repeat them. Let them be cleverly set down, and in a generation or two, when refutation is no longer possible, they will pass into admitted facts. "Calumny," says Sir Arthur Helps, "can make a cloud appear a mountain; nay, give it time, it can make a cloud become a mountain." The historian, when he comes to deal with these materials, thinks that he shows his impartiality by reporting evil as well as good. If he desires to be thought wise, he will incline rather to believe the evil than to disbelieve it, and the verdict is left to the opinion of the average public, which in those matters forms its opinions for itself. In Art and Science the public accepts the judgment of the specialist. It is conscious of its own inability, and allows itself to be guided. Every man is taught to suppose that he is a competent judge of political action; and as the majority of men are commonplace, their interpretations of character are naturally commonplace also. They explain conduct by motives with which they are themselves familiar. When they are told

that Cromwell was an ambitious hypocrite, they think it so likely that they do not care to look further; nay, as in some ages the disposition is to an extravagant worship of great men, so there is in others a disposition to disbelieve in their existence; a visible desire to deny superiority in any man, and to drag saint and hero down to the common level.

These tendencies are plainly traceable in most modern historic judgments. We believe what we consider likely to be true, rather than weigh the evidence by which it is proved to be true; and our biographical conceptions of the distinguished figures in past ages are still mythical. There is a mythology of excessive admiration; there is a mythology of studied depreciation; and both alike are fatal to a sound judgment. Of the first we are in little danger at present; as to the other, which is the worst of the two, a few words of warning will not be out of place.

To the student who would understand the history of the men and women . . . , [who

are called "great,"] I recommend the following considerations :—

Exceptional eminence in public life is generally found in abnormal times, when the constitution of society is changing ; when an old order of things is passing off, and a new order is coming in. Therefore no one is in a position to form a judgment on the conduct of men in such times who does not completely understand their position, and the element in which they had to work.

Men have accomplished great things in this world when they have represented the strongest and best contemporary interests and tendencies ; their contemporaries have said to them : Certain things must be done ; you see most clearly how they should be done ; do you do them, and we will honor you and stand by you. Confidence of this kind is not usually given to personally ambitious men, or to men abandoned to vicious pleasure. Their strength is in the cause of which they are champions ; so far as they have selfish objects they are weak.

Greatness is observed to be simultaneous

in all departments of human achievement. The age of great statesmen is the age of great artists and thinkers: something has stirred the highest qualities into activity, and the spiritual level is universally elevated. The Prince, or chief, who under these conditions is especially honored and admired, has the verdict in his favor of exceptionally good judges. We ought to bear this in mind when we are forming an opinion for ourselves.

Let us remember that libellous anecdotes are not necessarily true, because we read them in books a hundred or a thousand years old, and because they have been repeated ever since. The strength of the chain is only as great as the strength of its first link. A generous mind is clearer sighted than a mind prone to receive the worst interpretation; and, as Goethe says, "The way to insight is through good will."

IV

**THE IMPORT OF SOCIAL
CONDITIONS**

JOHN FISKE

IV.

THE IMPORT OF SOCIAL CONDITIONS.

BY JOHN FISKE.

IT is not true that industrial art is later in its beginnings than the arts of warfare and statesmanship, or than the inclination toward scientific inquiry. In their most rudimentary beginnings all these things were, no doubt, nearly simultaneous with each other, as well as with art, religion and poetry. Pre-glacial men scratched outline pictures of reindeer on their crude stone hammers ; the first man who explained an eclipse as the swallowing of the sun by a dragon, propounded an hypothesis of the kind by which the beginnings of science and of theology are alike characterized ; and poetry and music had their humble origin in tales about the dead hero, and rhythmical chants and dances in propi-

tiation of his ghost. The ingenious savage of primeval times who first discovered that it was easier and safer to float across a river on a log, if you hollowed out the log, was the legitimate precursor of Fulton and Ericsson. But the names of the clever men who invented canoes and bows and arrows are as utterly unknown to tradition as the names of the earliest myth-makers, or of those pre-Homeric heroes who won for the Aryan people the rich heritage of the southern peninsulas of Europe. It was only after civilization had already made considerable progress, after tribes of men had become united into large and stable political aggregates, and after the business of society had acquired a rather high degree of complexity, that individual men could achieve work of any sort on a sufficiently grand scale to arrest the attention of succeeding generations through thousands of years. Granting that some pre-Homeric hero may have had the native powers of a Hannibal, the fact that his achievements did not visibly affect great masses of society, but only the movements

of a few petty tribes, would be enough to prevent his fame surviving, save, perhaps, in some vague, half-intelligible legends about giants and demi-gods. But after the historical period, in the long career of nascent humanity, had fairly begun—after great societies had been formed, with generals and statesmen, poets and artists, and even philosophers—a long time had still to elapse before anything was heard of inventors of giant caliber and wonderful achievements like Arkwright and Watt. And this fact has in history a marked significance.

Before inventors of this sort were possible, it was necessary, in the first place, that society should have reached a state of comparative stability politically. The ages which witnessed the exploits of a Belisarius, a Pepin, or a Godfrey de Bouillon, were ages in which neither a Columbus nor a Gutenberg was possible. Amid such chronic political turmoil, there was no surplus energy which could be devoted to the exploration and colonization of remote countries, nor was there enough security for

industry at home to permit the adoption of new devices for facilitating industrial processes. In the second place, it was necessary both that commercial operations should have begun to cover a wide geographical range, and that the physical sciences should have made considerable progress. The application of both these considerations to the case of a discoverer like Columbus, is obvious enough ; but both are equally applicable to the case of such an inventor as Arkwright. Supposing that such a man could have been produced, and could have invented his spinning machine in the age of Augustus or of Trajan, no such results would have followed as were brought about a hundred years ago in England. The general knowledge of machinery was insufficient, and the general extension of commerce was also insufficient. And so it follows, in the third place, that when men of the intellectual caliber of Watt and Arkwright were born in such a state of society as that of ancient Rome, their attention was turned to other things, and not to the mechanical arts ; they

became statesmen or lawyers, poets or philosophers, but not inventors on a grand scale. There was no lack of inventive talent on the part of the ancients, especially as applied to processes of warfare, as was illustrated by the skillful devices with which the Romans, in the first Punic War, wrought such wholesale destruction on the Carthaginian fleets. But the men who devised these remarkable engines, though they effected a temporary purpose, accomplished nothing toward extending permanently the control of mankind over the forces of nature, or toward modifying the career of industry ; and so they are not remembered among the great inventors. The explanation of the non-appearance of Watts and Arkwrights in ancient times is not to be found, therefore, in any assumed lack of inventive talent, but in the social conditions which prevailed in antiquity and down to the close of the Middle Ages.

But there is a still more striking historic significance in the relatively late appearance of the heroes of industry. The paucity of

inventors in antiquity, and their increasing frequency in modern times, serves as the index of a great change that has been slowly taking place in the prevailing character of human activity. Whereas the basis of civilization was once mainly military, it has now become mainly industrial. Whereas the occupation of the greater part of mankind was once fighting and pillage, it is now the peaceful cultivation of the earth and the transformation of the earth's various productions into endlessly complex instruments for satisfying human wants, both physical and esthetic. Warfare has long been necessary for the purpose of securing and maintaining the political stability of great masses of men, without which industry itself could not attain to any high development. From this point of view, warfare has not yet ceased to be necessary, especially where civilized societies are molested or threatened by barbarous societies, and no doubt it will be a long time before warfare becomes extinct; but, in spite of this, the sphere of warfare in modern life

has become very much restricted. In such countries as England and the United States, it takes up the time and attention of only a very small part of the community, and only at considerable intervals acts as a real disturbance to the prevailing occupations, which are almost entirely concerned directly or indirectly, with industry. The enormous complication of modern society, which has been mainly brought about by the labors of industrial discoverers and inventors, in co-operation with scientific inquirers, has brought things to such a pass that men engage more and more unwillingly in warfare, and regard it more and more as an intolerable source of disturbance. And along with the diminution of the quantity of warfare, and the restriction of its sphere, there has gone on a gradual alteration in the feelings and in the manners of civilized men. This change has been shown in increased regard for domestic comfort, in the abolition of judicial torture and of cruel modes of punishment, in prison reforms, and generally in increased softness of temper and mildness

of manner. That this change is due to the general substitution of industrial for military activity, is too obvious to require detailed argument ; yet, when duly considered in all its bearings, the connection of this change with human happiness will be found to be so close that, even had nothing else been accomplished by the inauguration of the industrial era, we should still have ample ground for regarding the great discoverers and inventors as among the chief benefactors of mankind.

V

AN ARTIST HISTORIAN

WILLIAM JACKSON ARMSTRONG

V.

AN ARTIST HISTORIAN.

BY WILLIAM JACKSON ARMSTRONG.

IT is not yet five years since the death of a man peculiar in physical attributes, insignificant in person, awkward in bearing, and a stammerer in speech, yet informed with an intelligence and aspiration so lofty that he died leaving behind him accomplishment equaled by that of but few Americans.

Next to the poet and essayist, who deal with elemental ideas and human emotions, may be ranked as literary benefactors the artist historians, the writers who, like Thucydides and Tacitus and Hume and Gibbon and Macaulay, present the facts of the past in such attractive robes of speech that their narratives remain

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lasting possessions to our kind. Though the interval which has elapsed since his death and the appearance of the full body of his works has not been sufficient to give his achievement the benefit of this permanent perspective, there can hardly be a doubt that John Lord is destined to take high rank even among these greater gods of his literary class. And this will appear true whether he is judged by the volume of his contribution to historical writing or by the riches of thought and the quality of the diction in which he has embalmed his work. In this latter regard, of a luminous and fascinating literary style, he is certainly exceeded by no American writer of history, whether it be Prescott, or Parkman, or Irving himself—or even our latest luminary, John Fiske; and if Bancroft and Motley may be considered to take precedence of him by virtue of sustained efforts covering whole periods of national history, the admirers of Dr. Lord may fairly claim that, in the surpassing range of his historical studies, he has an advantage of even these acknowledged

masters. In this respect, indeed, of extended investigation and variety of theme, Dr. Lord stands alone, without a peer or competitor in the entire list of historical essayists. It is safe to believe, in fact, that, with the exceptions only of Macaulay and the late Spanish Castelar, no other modern literary student has looked so familiarly as he over the long perspective of the world's events.

For the last forty years of his life Dr. Lord made his home at the village of Stamford, Connecticut, from which point he passed out on his unceasing lecture tours, addressing tens of thousands of his countrymen, making his figure and his literary work familiar throughout the length and breadth of the land. He was almost equally well known in England. Attention to his work, temporarily diverted for a brief interval succeeding his death, through the absence of his unique personality, is beginning to be recalled in full measure by the solidity and worth as well as by the brilliancy of his literary remains. His works, published in com-

pleted form and showing the man in his real intellectual proportions, are now being sought for by thousands of readers on both sides of the Atlantic. The fact is gratifying to the lovers of elevating literature everywhere.

Doctor Lord's early discipline for his life-work as a literary man was of the loose and desultory sort which is the frequent antecedent of the career of genius. It is the instinct of winged talent to soar to its purpose even after many falls from attempted flight. Such was the experience of the young historian in his school and college years. Born in the old town of Portsmouth, New Hampshire, in the year 1810, he received his first rudiments of education under the severe and somewhat repugnant methods of the old-fashioned private school of that gloomy half Calvinistic period of New England history. He confesses in the partially written account of his own life that his school days were not happy, and that, being addicted to shirking his tasks, he rarely escaped one whipping a day, and sometimes

got two, until his hand became "as hard as a sailor's." His experiences at home were hardly more exhilarating, under the tutelage of his pious Calvinistic mother, who, he records, brought up her children in the old-fashioned orthodox way to "attend meeting three times on Sunday besides going to Sunday-school," and, as that day "was supposed to begin on Saturday at sundown, no books could be read until Monday except such works as Baxter's 'Saint's Rest,' Bunyan's 'Pilgrim's Progress,' Taylor's 'Holy Living,' with the 'Boston Recorder' for lighter reading."

Removing with his parents in his tenth year to the little town of Berwick, in the neighborhood of Portsmouth, young Lord continued his studies in the village academy under instructors who were described by him as having "pedantry without learning," and "vigor without discipline," until, at the end of six years, he left the institution, as he acknowledges, without having made any acquisitions except a repugnance to the study of Latin and Greek and a knowledge

of mythology obtained from Lemprière's Dictionary. A year or two later, in 1829, he was sent by his parents to Dartmouth College, the great northern seat of New England learning, presided over at that time by his distinguished uncle, Nathan Lord, erudite in his generation, but who has been pictured as, after the manner of college presidents of the period, a "disciplinarian rather than a teacher," and as a "rigid Calvinist who accepted all the deductions to which that system logically led." Calvinism, indeed, appears to have been the creed under whose shadow and influence the future historian was destined to begin and end his intellectual novitiate. And never did a somber theological mantle fall upon a more joyous and magnanimous spirit than in the case of this artist-chronicler of the world's events; for, while accepting, to the last, in theology, like his distinguished uncle and instructor, the postulates and deductions of a rigid and time-worn theology, Doctor Lord, as the mature essayist and philosopher, treated all systems of faith and the followers

of all creeds with a charity and tolerance as catholic as the needs of historical judgment. And only perhaps in the direction of impatience of rationalistic criticism, impairing the authority of Revelation itself, did his peculiar theology narrow him. But who will venture to deny that, as a professed believer in that Revelation upon whose integrity the whole body of historical theology must stand, or through whose even partial discredit it must fall, he was rigidly consistent? It is surely not the swarm of modern doctors of theology, who weakly consent to the compromise of rationalism with faith, that can assume the rôle of his critics here.

Four years at Dartmouth and three years additional spent at Andover Theological Seminary, whither he repaired at the end of his literary course to prepare himself for the ministry, which he had chosen as his vocation, completed young Lord's formal education for entrance into the world. But even these years, to his lasting regret, as he confesses in his autobiography, were not devoted to the steady discipline of academic training. They

had been broken with frequent and alternating episodes of school-teaching and experimental and vagrant lecture-tours; while, with the waywardness and indolence of his perverse genius in these younger years, he had, during the intervening period in college, systematically shirked all uncongenial studies and occupied himself in the college libraries with omnivorous reading, especially along the line of history and historical criticism, which, in spite of his predilection toward theology as a profession, seemed from the beginning to be his native bent. But who shall dictate the discipline or the method through which that extraordinary intellectual endowment which we call *genius* shall arrive at its triumphant end?

Emerging from the Andover Divinity School with the credentials of his chosen calling in his possession, in spite of his "ignorance of Hebrew," young Lord, for the period of three years, experimented with his career, partly as a traveling agent and lecturer of the American Peace Society, and partly in trying to establish himself in the

profession of the ministry. The experiment in both directions was attended with harassing and often comical vicissitudes. Success was qualified with too frequent disappointments to make his selected vocation satisfactory. The cast of his talents was distinctly moral and didactic, but the career of a theological teacher along conventional lines was evidently not in harmony with his peculiarly unconventional temperament. In his school years, neglecting whatever other studies, he had persistently cultivated rhetoric and the arts of expression. His instincts were literary and for historical investigation. It was his genius, his destiny. Fully conscious of this at last, he "decided about this period," says his formal biographer, "to adopt the profession of historical lecturer as his lifework."

Writing retrospectively of this resolution in later years, he says: "I felt that in some important respects thus far I was a failure and never could do anything or be anything so long as I pursued an uncongenial calling for which I was not fitted. I then took the

advice of some of my Andover friends and resolved to labor in some other way, where duty and pleasure ran in the same line. I did not turn my back on the ministry. For forty years afterwards, I preached wherever I was invited. I continued to revere a calling for which I was not adapted. I have always sought the society and friendship of ministers as the most learned, most useful, most sympathetic and most interesting class in the community. I resolved not to enter a strictly secular life, but to work in harmony with the profession in which I had been educated. As a lecturer on history I could bring to bear all my knowledge in defense of the truths of the Christian faith which I had never rejected nor even doubted. I thought I could be more useful to the church by advocating great fundamental truths in the lecture-room than in the pulpit; that I would thus be more free, untrammelled and bold, inasmuch as history covers everything—religious dogmas as well as science, politics, and art.”

From the time of taking this resolution,

about the year 1840, his career was fixed. And never was a career more steadily and consistently followed; and rarely has one been extended through so long a range of brilliant usefulness to our kind. During a period of more than half a century succeeding the adoption of his new work, Doctor Lord was not only a teacher of history, but a luminous expositor of its profoundest lessons, as they were examined and portrayed by him under the search-light of a keen philosophy and a stringent moral purpose. With the exception of the time spent in his library in the necessary preparation of his materials and his occasional visits to Europe to further the same end—to make his work solid and accurate—his life, during this entire period, covering more than a generation, was spent on the lecture-platform. In all the great cities of our continent, as well as in many of those of Great Britain, and in hundreds of our institutions of learning, larger and smaller, over the breadth of the land, he became in his yearly tours the recognized apostle and oracle of his great

themes. For, to hear him speak was, for young and old, to catch his own fire and to receive lasting impressions and inspiration in connection with the characters and scenes of history which his eloquence pictured. And it is worthy of note that with Doctor Lord eloquence was a paradox of almost all its formal rules; for, producing at times upon his audiences the effects of the great masters of oratory, it was itself produced through a physical human instrument apparently the most inadequate and hopeless that ever essayed the difficult art of the platform. Under the teachings of a lecturer whose person was diminutive, whose gestures were erratic movements of the arms ignoring all co-ordination with his thought, and who read his notes in a frayed, unmusical voice interrupted with a periodic thoracic sneeze, audiences sat spell-bound. It was the genius, the intensity of the orator himself, the intellectual face, the luminous, humorous yet earnest eyes, the power of concentrated feeling, surmounting all the conventional formulas of attractive speech,

and carrying the inspiration of his message straight to the brain and heart of his listeners.

It was not until the closing years of his life, which ended in December, 1894, that Doctor Lord desisted from this half a century strain of platform oratory and retired to his always delightful Stamford home, to embody in permanent and finished literary form the results of his life-work. When this was accomplished he had still a remaining year or two of enjoyable existence, passed with his family and in agreeable correspondence with his appreciative publishers, who had been from the beginning his admiring and devoted friends. Then, characteristically of the lofty spirit and philosophy which had always sustained him, he serenely, almost cheerfully, turned his face toward what to him was the sunrise of real existence. It was the tranquil close of a rounded life in character and accomplishment.

Besides his one notable work, to which longer attention will be called, Doctor Lord's

publications were his "Modern History," "Ancient States and Empires," "History of the United States," "The Old Roman World," and one or two text-books of history for schools and colleges. These all have their specific value and place in our current historical literature, but they are subordinate in importance, as they were in a sense preparatory to the one great achievement, his "Beacon Lights of History," the publication gathering into its compass the substantial fruits of his life, and destined, as it was by him designed, to be his literary monument. Of this splendid work it will be of interest to speak succinctly.

"Beacon Lights" was the felicitous ascriptive phrase chosen by Doctor Lord when he came to the task of giving final embodiment to his entire series of historical lectures as they had been delivered in his half-century of platform experience. This task when finished filled the ten volumes of "Beacon Lights" as they now appear, with about five hundred pages each of large and attractive print; the respective volumes con-

taining distinct and characteristic groups of twelve lectures of the series whose themes, dating from the earliest annals of our race and ending with events of the current time, make the completed work of one hundred and twelve lectures a panoramic retrospect of human history. In these essays every period of the world's past is regarded and epitomized, its own salient feature, or philosophy, being in turn made luminous; so that, from the standpoint of the reader, history becomes, as in some wondrous transformation scene, a perspective of gleaming points lost to view only in the remote gloom of primitive ages; the title of the volume being thus vindicated. In this phase the "Beacon Lights" series is unique, since, as has been already intimated, no other essayist, remote or recent, has attempted at once so wide a survey or so complete an analysis of the spirit of historic epochs.

There is still another feature peculiar to these volumes and commending them to the acceptance of the reader. Each epoch is

delineated under the name of its foremost character, or representative; as for example, "Life in the Fourteenth Century" is pictured in an essay on "Geoffry Chaucer"; the period of "Maritime Discoveries," under the heading "Christopher Columbus"; "Unsuccessful Reforms," under "Savanarola"; and the "Revival of Art," under "Michael Angelo." The fascinating quality of personal narrative is thus lent from first to last to what, in fact, are almost unequaled treatises on the philosophy of history. As has been said not inaptly: "The charm of Doctor Lord's writing is that, while the reader *unconsciously* takes distinct impression of the growths and changes of great eras, his attention is *consciously* fixed by the stirring recitals, the character-painting, the innumerable personal touches—the foibles, the failings, as well as the grand qualities—of illustrious men and women."

It is this biographical method of treating history, of grouping the events of a period under the shadow of the name representative of its distinctive tendency, or philosophy,

that has drawn unusual attention to Doctor Lord's literary accomplishment. In the use of this method he has enjoyed the distinction of being among American writers the pioneer; and, combined with the exquisite pictorial art with which he has set forth his themes, it is the method which has secured the author's just fame. It is only necessary to note the contents of a single volume of these master studies to indicate the nearly phenomenal range over which the author's vision swept and which his genius illumined in their preparation. The initial volume of the series, for instance, bearing the general title, "Jewish Heroes and Prophets," includes the treatment of the following themes: "Abraham: the Father of Religious Faith"; "Joseph: Israel in Egyptian Bondage"; "Moses: the Social and Moral Law"; "Samuel: the Judges and Prophets"; "David: Israelitish Conquests"; "Solomon: the Glory of the Monarchy"; "Elijah: the Division of the Kingdom"; "Isaiah: National Degeneracy"; "Jeremiah: the Fall of Jerusalem"; "Esther and

Mordecai: Hebrew Statesmen Abroad"; "The Maccabees: the Heroic Age of Judaism"; "Saint Paul: the Spread of Christianity."

Succeeding this is the volume on "Pagan Antiquity," containing essays on Cyrus, Socrates, Phidias, Julius Cæsar, Cicero, Marcus Aurelius, Constantine, Chrysostom, Saint Ambrose, Saint Augustine, and other representative characters of the ancient world, made to stand for such phases of the general subject as "Asiatic Supremacy," "Greek Philosophy," "Greek Art," "Imperialism," "Roman Literature," *et cetera*.

And let it be noted that every one of these more than one hundred essays is a masterly treatise or, more than that, a profound and comprehensive study of its subject, made from an exhaustive investigation of its literature,—an investigation which would have enabled the author to write volumes instead of a single essay on the theme. Doctor Lord tells us that in the preparation of a single lecture he not infrequently read and consulted as many as three hundred

books. This being the quality and measure of his work, two or, at most, three such volumes as have been described might of themselves well be considered a respectable contribution to our literature from a single brain. But the "Beacon Lights" series, with its almost boundless motive and scope, proceeds through its nearly six thousand pages to unfold its panoramic riches; the eight volumes succeeding those just mentioned presenting, under their appropriate titles, from Mohammed and Charlemagne to Hildebrand and Wyclif, the mighty figures of the "Middle Ages"; from Dante and Angelo to Calvin and Galileo, the poets, the theologians and discoverers of the "Renaissance and the Reformation"; from Cleopatra to George Eliot, the "Great Women" of history; from Richelieu and Cromwell to Mirabeau and Napoleon and Webster, the modern orators, warriors, and masters of diplomacy; and, under the titles of "Modern European Statesmen," "American Statesmen," and "Nineteenth Century Writers," the whole galaxy of great names in statesmanship,

diplomacy, and letters, from Chateaubriand, Metternich, Washington, and Franklin to Cavour, Bismarck, Clay, Lincoln, Sir Walter Scott, Byron, and Macaulay. These ten volumes are, in truth, what they have been eloquently described to be : " An epitome of human achievement in religion, government, philosophy, science, art, architecture, society, reforms, politics, war, education, and literature—the whole forming a philosophically connected view of the world's life and progress for five thousand years, marking the currents that have directed the movements of races, swayed empires, shown the force of ideas, and controlled the destinies of mankind."

Professor C. B. Galbreath, the eloquent State Librarian for Ohio, has aptly said : " No one enjoys the opportunity to read the best literature of his time who has not access to ' Lord's Beacon Lights of History.' " It is, however, the suggestiveness of these volumes equally with their treasures of historic information which constitutes their signal value to students and literary readers,

—through opening vast and varied perspectives of human action and thus offering new fields to the imagination.

As a literary artist, Doctor Lord has not taken the exalted rank which he is unquestionably destined to occupy; although a constantly growing number of the most critical English and American scholars is being added to the list of his advocates—becoming, indeed, his enthusiastic admirers. Among these former was the eminent historian, the late Professor James Anthony Froude, while, on this side of the Atlantic, educators as distinguished as the diplomatist, Andrew D. White, formerly of Cornell, and President Francis I. Patton of Princeton, are foremost among those paying tribute to his literary talent; indorsing in substance the verdict of their professional associate, Professor Mowry, of the Salem (Mass.) public schools, who, in characterizing the work of the author of "*Beacon Lights*," ventures the superlative eulogy that "no mortal man ever threw such learning, such wide reading, such graphic delineation

tion into his discourse on a historical theme. His lectures," he adds, "are a series of paintings."

It is possible that Doctor Lord's life-occupation as an itinerant lecturer, breeding the accustomed "contempt" of "familiarity," may have temporarily retarded his recognition as one of the greatest lights of his literary class. However this may be, it is apparent that ample amends are about to be offered for this somewhat belated appreciation. As with the critics and scholars, an increasingly large section of our most intelligent reading public is now turning towards his works—and with an increasing approval and admiration. The cause is not far to seek. Doctor Lord had within himself all the elements which make literary work endure—the complete equipment of the literary workman, the mental and spiritual machinery that impresses the classic stamp. He had scope, philosophy, and imagination. To these he added industry, tireless and relentless. He had the artistic sense in its highest perfection. He writes history like

Plutarch : his character-studies are portraits. Of these it has been pertinently said that, " being the study of real heroes, they yield all the delights of fiction while imparting real information " ; as it has again been affirmed of these delineations by a distinguished American jurist and diplomat, " the writer clothes the bones of history with flesh and blood, and moulds its lessons with human form, color, and expression."

Sometimes the author of " Beacon Lights" completes the summary of an epoch or a hero with an epigram or a single flashing phrase, as when, comparing the Feudal period with our own times, he distinguishes that the " Middle Ages recognized the majesty of God, the nineteenth century the majesty of Man " ; and again, he avers of Cardinal Richelieu that he was " cunning as a fox, brave as a lion, supple as a dog, all things to all men—an Alcibiades, a Jesuit." These piquant touches he employs sparingly, however, as no writer steers wider than he of the merely loud and sensational in composition. On the contrary, the very purity

and symmetry of his diction may produce with the indiscriminating the effect of symmetry in natural objects—that of diminishing the grandeur of real proportions. No error could be greater than one in this direction with reference to the vigor of his expression. He is a writer of first-class power and intensity. It is simply true that he combines with force a grace and facility not elsewhere exceeded. From the point of view of literary manner alone, such essays as those of the “Beacon Lights” series rise to the dignity of true art-works as really as do any corresponding papers by Froude or Carlyle or Macaulay ; there being only this discrimination, that the method of the American writer is wholly without affectation—which to many will appear the finer art of literary treatment, in that it leaves the mind of the reader entirely occupied with the theme under examination.

Placing his work page by page by the side of even such picturesque art-studies as those of John Ruskin, esteemed a quarter of a century ago the exemplar in English com-

position, the craft of the American does not suffer by the comparison, while it enjoys the advantage of being applied to the illustration of verities which do not fade when considered apart from their literary treatment.

Such is the quality of Doctor Lord's work, the "art that conceals art"—illustrating also the open secret that the rare and final achievement in every art is nature's own simplicity. He tells you his story with the directness and fervor with which he might recite it in animated conversation sitting with you through a summer evening on his hospitable veranda. But there is always economy of statement—always reserved power and imaginative intensity, the perfection of true artistic composition. The dissection of a character or an era of which Macaulay would make an epigram and Carlyle a series of interjections, he places before you in direct vivid phrase. Of Carlyle himself, for instance, he says: "This hyperborean literary giant, speaking a Babylonian dialect, smiting mercilessly all pretenders and quacks, and even honest

fools, was himself personally a bundle of contradictions, fierce and sad by turns. He was a compound of Diogenes, Jeremiah, and Doctor Johnson ; like the Grecian cynic in his contempt and scorn, like the Jewish prophet in his melancholy lamentations, like the English moralist in his grim humor and overbearing dogmatism." No more comprehensive or graphic delineation has been presented of the dyspeptic Scotch essayist.

Again, characterizing Bonaparte, he says : " His egotism was almost superhuman, his selfishness most unscrupulous, his ambition absolutely boundless. He claimed a monopoly in perfidy and lying ; he had no idea of moral responsibility. He had no sympathy with misfortune, no conscience, no fear of God. He was cold, hard, ironical, and scornful. He was insolent in his treatment of women, brusque in his manners, severe on all who thwarted or opposed him. He committed great crimes in his ascent to supreme dominion, and mocked the reason, the conscience, and the rights of mankind."

To Doctor Lord's style has been applied

the epithet "luminous." The ascription is defective in its failure to convey the full conception of its true quality of light. His diction is a limpid stream of simple eloquent speech running in the broad sunlight itself, and flashing to the reader's mind every tint and hue of the mental region through which it is directed. Whether he discourses upon the lofty mission and supernal visions of the Hebrew Judges and Prophets, the scholastic philosophy of Thomas Aquinas, the conquests of Charlemagne, or the stimulating social diversions of the salon of Madame de Récamier, you are with him at every turn and instant of the proceeding, absorbed, eager, and, at times, entranced. No quip of fanciful or oblique speech, no trick of posing on the part of the author, for a moment diverts consciousness from the central point of attention. Everything is direct, forward, intense, powerful. It is only at the end that the reader realizes the refinement of the art by which he has been captivated.

Any account of Doctor John Lord which failed to note his surpassing qualifications

for his vocation as a critical historian would be curiously deficient. His aptitude for his calling was partly a gift and partly an acquisition. He had the historical instinct, or genius, paramount. But to this he added labor. Beginning his career with a little special training in theology and a refreshing absence of solid or accurate information along every other line of investigation, (except history), through the necessity of becoming himself a teacher of his fellows he gradually extended his acquirements until his command of the whole range of knowledge which concerns the history of human commonwealths was little less than amazing. As he reviews the rise and progress of states, intricate questions are dissected and touched upon by him with the firm hand of the specialist in each department—questions of the constitutions of governments, diplomacy, finance, revenues, tariffs, coinage, and the subtlest problems of political economy. No writer, indeed, has surpassed him in this catholic mastery of the components of history. The land regulations and

the distribution of wealth under the Cæsars, the legal codes of Justinian and Constantine, the devices for revenue by the English sovereigns, the financial expedients of Law and Talleyrand and Neckar, the tariff provisions of Henry Clay, and the National Banking scheme made notorious by the enmity of Jackson, are all described and passed upon by this divinity student turned historian, as familiarly as he pictures the policy of the mighty papal Hildebrand or the spiritual conceptions of Saint Ambrose and Chrysostom.

That, however, which is even more remarked by the student of Lord is the element which has been called the "historical imagination,"—that element which is the creation at once of aptitude and of learning. In these days of rapid book-making, when knowledge is too frequently the result of cramming, when the complex data of history are swiftly overhauled and historical characters recast in a night, to meet the demands for a short-cut process to information, even reputable essayists are content to make

brief special studies of single historic periods or characters and to lay the result of their hasty investigation, dressed in more or less meretricious rhetoric, before the public. Not such were the conception and methods of the author of "Beacon Lights of History." Doctor Lord's knowledge of history is fundamental. Each separate essay from his pen rests upon, as it is illumined by, a familiarity with the entire story of the world's past, whose events appear as the common furniture of his mind, and whose literature, for convenient illustration, is at his instant command. His survey of the historic domain is as with a far-flashing search-light from a hilltop; or it may be said that his study of the past has been so comprehensive, so detailed, so elaborate, that its events lie before him as in a bird's-eye view on a single shining field of vision—every period related to its antecedents and successors, every incident and character with their abounding analogies through the ages. By such immense conceptions of his mission, by such tireless studies, is the imagi-

nation of the historian formed. And it is safe, and not extravagant, to say that no expositor of the past has equaled Doctor Lord in his quality of comprehension.

His perception of resemblances, his groupings of characters and incidents, separated from each other by the remotest periods and the most diverse environments in time, form for the reader a constant succession of startling and agreeable surprises, while throwing abundant light on the subjects under examination. Thus, while reviewing the story of the Hebrew Mordecai and Esther, his mind turns toward Richelieu and Madame de Maintenon in modern France; the horrors of St. Bartholomew suggest their parallels in those inflicted in the destruction of Jerusalem by Titus, and of Magdeburg by Tilly; the character of Catharine de Medicis recalls the savage Fredegunda and even Mary of Scotland; Cæsar, the Roman patrician, like the French aristocrat, Mirabeau, appeals to the masses against his own order; Cato in his narrow-mindedness and conservatism finds his ana-

logue in the modern Wellington ; the Roman Constantine is described to be as politic as the French Henry IV., and Sully, the minister of Henry, as faithful a servitor to his prince as was Burleigh to Elizabeth ; the wise Aristotle is the forerunner of the modern many-sided Humboldt ; the peculant Verres arraigned by Cicero is the fitting historic companion-piece of the spoliator, Hastings, under the invective of Burke ; the names of Charlemagne and Peter the Great of Russia are linked together in their labors to establish an empire, while the Jewish David is associated with Washington and Alfred the Great ; the sage Confucius is joined in comparison with Solomon ; and St. Augustine, in giving shape to the new doctrines of the Church, is likened as a benefactor to Alexander Hamilton who fixed the principles and financial policy of the great Republic ; Cicero is observed to have won his legal reputation in the defense of Roscius, and Daniel Webster in the Dartmouth College case ; the learned and spiritual Arius of the early Church is described

to be as reproachless in character as our modern Parker or Channing ; and the name of Oliver Cromwell is associated with that of Abraham Lincoln in respect of the solemnity of his burdens and his enjoyment of a joke.

These and hundreds of similar parallels glow like gems on the pages of Doctor Lord's works, casting their searching side-lights into every corner and crevice of history.

But it is not as a specialist, or chronicler of the mere details of the past, that the author of "Beacon Lights" is in his prime. He is essentially and above all an expounder of the *meaning* of the world's transactions, the artist philosopher, who projects the X-ray of his analysis through the very body of historic epochs and detects the pith and core of their significance. Read his essay on the "Feudal System" and the identical structure of the Middle Ages rises before you—the causes and origin, the central thought and purpose of those somber, suppressed centuries made clear as the noon-tide of a modern era. Read his "Saint

Bernard," and the beginnings and philosophy of that vast and complex scheme of monasticism, which for centuries covered human society, are pictured and realized as distinctly as the character-casts in a modern novel.

As an expounder of the philosophy of history, indeed, the author of "Beacon Lights" must be given a high place among the select few who have attempted the difficult rôle of interpreters of the past. His investigations do not assume the formal pretensions of the essays of Guizot or the German Hegel, though possessing the merit of equal profundity, while his conclusions are placed before the reader with a directness and lucidity to which those more famous Continental expositors can lay but slight claim.

But, stepping out of the past, Doctor Lord has met and recognized the problems of his own time. He has anticipated the anarchies and despotism of an age of concentrated wealth—the threatened impoverishment and enslavement of men under the

reign of the billionaire : and he boldly challenges the fallibility of that political economy under which such a consummation of human history is made possible.

These great and just praises having been accorded, it remains to be admitted that there is an aspect in which Doctor Lord's claims as an historical critic are to be received with a more qualified approbation. The reference is to his peculiar theological bias. It is the single limitation of his great endowment as a philosophical reviewer of the world's past—the fly in the amber of his literary reputation, judged from literature's standpoint. Abandoning the profession of the ministry for the pursuits of the historical essayist, he did not sufficiently gain his own consent to abdicate the functions of the theologian, and is tempted at times to apply the rules of dogma to phenomena, not susceptible of their measurement. Amid the splendors of dissertation on most momentous events there falls at intervals on his pages the shadow of a too narrow theological creed. He wavers for an instant before ac-

cording full praise to Thomas Jefferson, because Jefferson, as he confesses, had largely imbibed his sentiments of liberty from the study of Voltaire and the sneering deist, Rousseau. While picturing with intense colors the darkness and degeneracy of the Middle Ages, he is still moved to idealize that hopeless epoch by reason of its being an age of *faith*, as against the more materialistic even if more humane character of modern centuries ; forgetting that neither the hardness of the Feudal times nor the humanity of the present can be justly attributed to the greater or less amount of religious belief in the two periods. Influenced by the same mental antecedents, he inclines to rehabilitate the Biblical David after the murder of Uriah, while holding Napoleon to the full measure of responsibility for the assassination of D'Enghien ; ignoring the identical quality of their respective crimes against humanity.

It is clearly the case of the old-school Calvinistic New England Andover of his student days holding at the end of half a

century the rein over her gifted son as he appeals to his modern auditors. Recognizing the essential sanity and liberality of his nature, it is easy to credit that fifty years' delay in the date of his birth, or the difference of a degree of latitude in the locality of his theological training, might have contributed to Doctor Lord's literary fame.

But strangely enough, the fault, or defect, here pointed out has in no material sense affected the solidity of his conclusions as a historian. It is perceived rather as a tendency, or moral bias, which his reason combats, than as a flaw warping the integrity of his final judgments. It is a subjective rather than an objective entity,—a cast of thought which may qualify, for a time only, the estimate of his work at the severe bar of literary tribunals, but which cannot conceal from that wider republic of intelligence to which he appeals his splendid contribution to historical criticism and knowledge. Everywhere on his pages there is evidence of the noblest qualities of heart and brain—tolerance, breadth, candor, and just discrimination.

But as the expounder of history it is in ethical quality that Doctor Lord is supreme. It is here that he is seen to tower into a region where he is easily among the foremost interpreters of the past. He is, in a word, the ethical historian *par excellence*. It was, indeed, with this purpose, as he confesses, of applying the moral touchstone to the widest possible compass of facts, of drawing lessons from the entire field of human experience, and of becoming an ethical teacher in the broadest sense that he obtained his own consent to abandon the profession of the ministry. His inherited instincts from his New England ancestry, as well as his theological training—which, if in those yet early times it prescribed abnormal rigidities of creed, still inculcated the imposing sanctities of moral obligation—left him no other choice than that of being a moral instructor. And loyally did he pursue his mission. Every problem of history became to him a problem of righteousness. In this aspect and quality his writings possess their especial and pre-eminent value. Against the tendency of every

epoch, against every confused and puzzling transaction of history, whether of states or individuals, he presses the ethical question until he has forced from it the lesson of Right. Whether he analyzes the conduct of Cæsar in the overthrow of the Republic, the motives of Cromwell in becoming the dictator of the Commonwealth, the zeal of Becket in defending ecclesiastical prerogative, or the morality of Frederick and Napoleon in their wars against states, the inquiry pursued is still for the fundamental good of humanity. And when the inquiry is ended, the answer is rendered, not in the rhetoric of the casuist, not in the distorted phrasings and megalophonous sophistications of Carlyle, confusing power with right and success with justice, but in tones clear and certain as the strokes of an evening bell, and appealing to the common sense and conscience of mankind.

Writing of Cromwell and the execution of Charles, he says: "Cromwell was at the bottom of the affair as much as John Calvin was responsible for the burning of Servetus. There never has a great crime or

blunder been committed on this earth which bigoted, or narrow, or zealous partisans have not attempted to justify. Bigoted Catholics have justified the slaughter of St. Bartholomew. Partisans have no law but expediency. All jesuits—political, religious, and social, in the Catholic and Protestant churches alike—seem to think that the end justifies the means, even in the most beneficial reforms; and when pushed to the wall by the logic of opponents will fall back on the examples of the Old Testament. In defense of lying and cheating they will quote Abraham at the court of Pharaoh. There is no insult to human understanding more flagrant than the doctrine that we may do evil that good may come.”

Writing of the Conquest of Silesia and the aggressions of Frederick the Great, he says : “ So far as a life devoted to the military and political aggrandizement of a country makes a man a patriot, Frederick the Great will receive the plaudits of those men who worship success, and who forget the enormity of unscrupulous crimes in the outward glory which

immediately resulted,—yea, possibly of contemplative statesmen who see in the rise of a new power an instrument of the Almighty for some inscrutable end. To me his character and deeds have no fascination any more than the fortunate career of our modern millionaires would have to one who took no interest in finance. It was doubtless grateful to the dying king of Prussia to hear the plaudits of his idolaters, as he stood on the hither shore of eternity ; but his view of the spectators as they lined those shores must have been soon lost sight of and their cheering and triumphant voices unheard and disregarded, as the bark in which he sailed alone put forth in the unknown ocean to meet the Eternal Judge of the living and the dead.”

Once more referring to the partition of Poland, in which Frederick participated, he writes : “ Might does not make right by the eternal decrees of God Almighty written in the Bible and on the consciences of mankind. Politicians whose prime law is expediency may justify such acts as public

robbery, for they are political jesuits—always were, always will be ; and even calm statesmen, looking on the overruling event, may palliate ; but to enlightened Christians there is only one law : ‘ Do unto others as ye would that they should do unto you.’ Nor can Christian civilization reach an exalted plane until it is in harmony with the eternal laws of God.”

Of the great minds illuminating France in the era succeeding the Revolution, he says : “ These kings and queens of society represented not material interests,—not commerce, not manufactures, not stocks, not capital, not railways, not trade, not industrial exhibitions, not armies and navies, but ideas, those invisible agencies which shake thrones and make revolutions and lift the soul above that which is transient to that which is permanent,—to religion, to philosophy, to art, to poetry, to the glories of home, to the certitudes of friendship, to the benedictions of Heaven.”

These and hundreds of other similar reflections profusely current in every volume

of Doctor Lord's writings mark the standard of a morality such as has been rarely applied to the measurements of history,—a morality which is that of neither the casuist nor the ascetic, but which is as lofty as it is clear, and which is fit for the instruction and inspiration of all ages. In an epoch like the present, sorely tempted by the glitter of material riches and power, it is the quality which pre-eminently commends his work to the rising generation of students, and which forms the priceless jewel in the crown of his fame. To such translators of the past the debt of intelligent gratitude is an ever-filling cup, since, neither dazzled by power nor warped in reason by the conventions of mankind, they are our beneficent instructors, keeping their vision clear and single to that eternal law of right which we name Justice, that sleeps not nor changes through the changing centuries, but keeps its righteous and loyal reckoning with the institutions and the deeds of men.

VI

THE TITANS

RALPH WALDO EMERSON

VI.

THE TITANS.

BY RALPH WALDO EMERSON.

THE Spanish historians tell us that it was not any of the wild and unknown animals or fruit or even the silver and gold of the new world, but the wild *man*, that concentrated the curiosity of the contemporaries of Columbus. And we all of us remember in the charming account of the Prince of the Pelew Islands, brought in the last century into England, that what most of all the splendid shows of London fastened his eye with mystery of joy, was the mirror in which he saw himself. In like manner it is not the monster, it is not the remote and unknown, which can ever powerfully work on the human mind; the way to touch all the springs of wonder in us is to get before our eyes as thought, that which we are feeling and doing. The things that we do we

think not. What I am I cannot describe any more than I can see my eyes. The moment another describes to me the man I am—pictures to me in words that which I was feeling and doing, I am struck with surprise. I am sensible of a keen delight. I be, and I see my being, at the same time. The soul glances from itself to the picture with lively pleasure. Behold what was in me, out of me! Behold the subjective now objective. Behold the spirit embodied.

What does every earnest man seek in the deep instinct of society, from his first fellowship—a child with children at play—up to the heroic cravings of friendship and love—what but to find himself in another mind: because such is the law of his being that only can he find out his own secret through the instrumentality of another mind. We hail with gladness this new acquisition of ourselves. That man I must follow, for he has a part of me; and I follow him that I may acquire myself.

The great are our better selves, ourselves with advantages. It is the only platform on

which all men can meet. If you deal with a vulgar mind, life is reduced to beggary. He makes me rich, him I call Plutus, who shows me that every man is mine, and every faculty is mine—who does not impoverish me in praising Plato, but contrariwise is adding assests to my inventory.

An ethereal sea ebbs and flows, surges and washes hither and thither, carrying its whole virtue into every creek and inlet which it bathes. To this sea every human house has a water-front. Every truth is a power. Every idea from the moment of its emergence begins to gather material forces—after a little while makes itself known. It works first on thoughts, then on things; makes feet, and afterwards shoes; first hands then gloves; makes men, and so the age and its material soon after. The history of the world is nothing but a procession of clothed ideas. As certainly as water falls in rain on the tops of mountains, and runs down into valleys, plains, and pits, so does thought fall first in the best minds, and runs down from class to class, until it reaches the masses and works revolutions.

The Universal Man is now coming to be a real being in the individual mind, as once the Devil was. All questions touching human life the daily press now discusses. I will not say that there is no darker side to the picture, or that what is gained in universality is not lost in enthusiasm. We have in the race the sketch of a man which no individual comes up to. I figure to myself the world as a hollow temple, and each several mind as an exponent of some sacred part therein ; each a jet of flame affixed to some capital, or triglyph, or rosette, bringing out its significance to the eye by its shining.

We delight in heroes, but we can hardly call them a class : for the essence of heroism is that it takes the man out of all class. We call them providential men. They draw multitudes and nations after them, as the nation shares the idea that inspires them. I know the pure examples are few ; a few benefactors scattered along history to make the earth sweet. For the most part, the mud of temperament clouds the purity, and we see this sheathed omnipotence in char-

acters we cannot otherwise respect. They show their legitimate prerogative in nothing more than their power to misguide us. For the perverted great derange and deject us, and perplex ages with their fame.

The great men of the past did not slide by any fortune into their high place. They have been selected by the severest of all judges, Time. As the snow melts in April, so has this mountain lost in every generation a new fragment. Every year new particles have dropped into the flood, as the mind found them wanting in permanent interest, until only the Titans remain.

END.

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